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**OWNERSHIP OR/AND DEPENDENCY?
EU-FUNDED CIVIL SOCIETY PROJECTS IN AFRICA AND THE POLITICS OF LOCAL
OWNERSHIP IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

MASTER'S THESIS

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Summary: This thesis examines how the design and funding mechanisms of selected EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa shape local CSO ownership and donor dependency. Using a comparative qualitative case-study approach and a structured scoring framework, 10 projects are assessed across ownership and dependency indicators. The study finds that local ownership and donor dependency are different but interacting dimensions that may coexist within the same project, and identifies the project mechanisms that strengthen or constrain local control.

THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	17
1.1. Theoretical lens.....	17
1.2. Ownership-dependency matrix	21
2. METHODOLOGY	22
2.1. Research design	22
2.2. Case selection and data	23
2.3. Geographical scope and case-selection rationale.....	24
2.4. Operationalisation of local ownership and donor dependency	25
2.5. Data analysis	29
2.6. Limitations of the research and sample	31
3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS.....	33
3.1. Overview of the cases and ownership - dependency distribution.....	33
3.2. Pattern 1: Localisation of activities and contextual adaptation versus local strategic authority	39
3.3. Pattern 2: Access to resources versus strategic control.....	42
3.4. Pattern 3: Local project governance versus intermediary functions.	47
3.5. Pattern 4: Donor priorities and projectisation versus local empowerment	53
3.6. Pattern 5: Upward accountability versus community accountability.....	59
3.7. Summary of empirical findings	64
4. CONCLUSIONS.....	74

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPVA	Central Project Management Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
FIAP	Fundación para la Internacionalización de las Administraciones Públicas
GfA	Guidelines for Applicants
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TAU	Technical Assistance Unit

INTRODUCTION

Civil society organisations are widely recognised in development cooperation as important actors of governance, social accountability, public participation and many other important internal and external spheres. According to the EU external actions, CSOs contribute to democratic participation, human rights, the rule of law, inclusive development and even peace and conflict prevention. The EU's Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations 2021-2027 seeks to strengthen CSOs as independent actors, improve their operating environment, support inclusive participation in policy dialogue and develop their organisational capacities. The programme itself in terms of funds allocation is as well significant - a total allocation for CSOs is €1.51185 billion under NDICI-Global Europe, with at least 75 % of the funding intended to be managed by EU Delegations through country allocations.¹ This makes EU-funded civil society support an important field for analysing how external funding structures relationships between donors, intermediaries and local CSOs as well as what kind of impact it gives to the local communities.

However, critical scholarship has questioned whether donor support necessarily strengthens the autonomy of civil society.² Some authors argue that, through funding priorities, contractual requirements, reporting systems and project-based forms of cooperation, donors may also incorporate CSOs into externally defined development agendas, potentially limiting their ability to determine their own priorities and strategies. This creates a central tension for EU civil-society support - the same funding arrangements that provide local organisations with resources, capacity and opportunities for participation may simultaneously increase their reliance on donor resources and institutional frameworks.

This tension is also reflected in evaluations cited in the previously mentioned EU's Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations 2021-2027. The programme document notes that CSOs have frequently continued to operate as traditional implementers of aid rather than as independent actors of governance. The same document reports that EU cooperation remained concentrated among a relatively limited group of international and traditional CSOs and that support reaching local and grassroots organisations remained limited.³ EU-funded projects may therefore strengthen local organisations by providing finance, knowledge, institutional capacity and political

¹European Commission, *Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations: Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027* (Brussels: European Commission, 2021), 1, 6.

²Jude Howell, Jenny Pearce, "Manufacturing Civil Society from the Outside: Donor Interventions," in *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 89-122, <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/manufacturing-civil-society-from-the-outside-donor-interventions/>; Alan Fowler, *Civil Society, NGOs and Social Development: Changing the Rules of the Game*, Geneva 2000 Occasional Paper No. 1 (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2000), viii, 18-19; OECD, *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society*, The Development Dimension (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), 35,75, doi:10.1787/51eb6df1-en.

³ European Commission, *Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations*, 7.

opportunities while simultaneously reproducing reliance on donor resources, procedures or intermediary organisations.⁴

This thesis raises a central analytical concern regarding the extent to which EU-funded civil-society projects function as mechanisms that either strengthen local ownership and locally driven development or, alternatively, reinforce dependency on donor priorities, resources and implementation structures, and under what conditions it is possible to change/mitigate/strengthen both dimensions. This thesis examines that tension by treating local ownership and project-level donor dependency as related but analytically separate dimensions. Instead of assuming that an EU-funded project creates either ownership or dependency, the thesis investigates, if possible, to what degree both characteristics may interact with each other and be present within the same project.

Analysing the Global South, it was found out that only a small portion of available resources is allocated directly to civil society organizations operating there. Most aid is channelled through multilateral organisations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, or provided bilaterally to specific countries, programmes, and regions. Although part of this bilateral aid is allocated to NGOs and civil society organisations, the majority is directed to large international NGOs, either for the direct delivery of assistance or as intermediaries responsible for transferring funds to “partner” organisations in the Global South. As a result, small and informal organisations based in developing countries often struggle to access the financial resources needed to sustain their activities. According to the 2018 data, only less than 1% of funds was received directly of the development assistance from which 68% goes to donor country based CSOs, 24,7% goes to INGOs and only 6 % reached southern-based CSOs.⁵

Against this background, the thesis also investigates how local ownership and donor dependency are shaped within EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa. It focuses particularly on the role of project design, funding arrangements, decision-making structures and implementation modalities in determining the space available for local CSOs participation and local control. The central research question guiding the study is therefore: *How, and to what extent, do the design and funding arrangements of selected EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa enable local CSOs ownership while creating or mitigating donor dependency?* By addressing this question, the thesis seeks to identify not only whether ownership and dependency are present, but also the specific mechanisms through which they may or may not coexist within the same project.

⁴ European Commission, *Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations*, 7.

⁵ CIVICUS, *Understanding the Resourcing Landscape for Small and Informal Civil Society Groups in the Global South: Challenges, Trends and Behaviours Identified Through a Comparative Analysis of Grey Literature* (Johannesburg: CIVICUS, 2019), 4.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the existing literature and academic debates on local ownership, donor dependency, localisation and the role of donors in civil-society support. It identifies the main concepts, arguments and areas of disagreement that provide the basis for the theoretical framework developed in the following section. The literature review also defines the research problem and establishes the objective, tasks, approach and relevance of the thesis, thereby linking the existing literature to the empirical analysis of selected EU-funded civil-society projects.

Local ownership and aid effectiveness

In development cooperation, ownership is usually understood as the ability of partner countries to lead their own development strategies. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness defines ownership through partner-country leadership over development policies and strategies, while donors are expected to align their support with those priorities. The donors are demanded through funding to strengthen partner country's sustainable capacity to develop rather than implement the donor's vision of development, because capacity development is the responsibility of the partner countries with only the support of the donors. Donors are expected to respect that leadership, align their assistance with partner-country strategies and strengthen rather than replace domestic capacities.⁶ The Accra Agenda for Action broadened this state-centred understanding by calling on governments to engage parliaments, local authorities and civil-society organisations in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of development policies. It also recognised CSOs as independent development actors in their own right.⁷ Nevertheless, the Paris and Accra frameworks mainly address ownership at the level of partner countries, governments, national strategies and country systems rather than the distribution of decision-making authority inside individual projects.⁸

A related attempt to translate ownership into operational practice is expressed through the concept of localisation. The OECD defines localisation in humanitarian response as a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the leadership of local authorities and the capacity of local civil society to respond to the needs of affected populations and prepare national actors for future responses.⁹ Localisation therefore concerns more than transferring funding or implementation tasks to a local organisation, but it also concerns the redistribution of leadership, responsibility and

⁶OECD (2005), *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD Publishing, Paris), 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264098084-en>.

⁷OECD, *Accra Agenda for Action* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2008), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264098107-en>.

⁸OECD, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, 3-9; OECD, *Accra Agenda for Action*, 2-6

⁹OECD, "Localising the Response," *OECD Development Perspectives*, no. 4 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f91329d-en>.

decision-making authority among the donors, intermediaries, local partners and CSOs¹⁰. It is important to note that merely transferring goods or implementation responsibilities to a local organisation does not fulfil the substantive meaning of localisation when the organisation has not participated in the wider programme cycle.¹¹ This distinction is directly relevant to civil-society projects because the use of a local CSO as an implementing partner does not by itself demonstrate that the organisation owns the project.¹²

Whitfield provides a further useful distinction between ownership as commitment and ownership as control.¹³ Ownership as commitment means that a recipient accepts or supports a policy regardless of who selected it, whereas ownership as control concerns the recipient's authority over the process and outcome of choosing and implementing the policy. This distinction means that a CSO can strongly support a project without having exercised meaningful influence over its design, budget, indicators or implementation arrangements.¹⁴ However, it is noticed that who has funds in their hands, they dictate the rules and it is up to the donor how the priorities will be set and they decide if they want to align it or set aside its own priorities and endorse those of the recipient.¹⁵ Booth also adds that that development works when it is country owned and not otherwise. Moreover, it should be taken into account that ownership is fundamentally political rather than simply technical, so this definition should not be taught as only programme/project implementation, monitoring.¹⁶ He argues that development depends primarily on domestic efforts and that aid should facilitate such efforts rather than attempt to replace them¹⁷.

Helleiner similarly argues that external support should use methods that do not suppress or substitute for local initiative and that meaningful ownership requires active leadership in the development of locally generated programmes.¹⁸ This indicates that ownership concerns not only whether local actors participate but also whether the intervention originates from, and remains directed by, their own analysis and priorities.¹⁹ Moreover, it is said that African countries, meaning

¹⁰OECD, "Localising the Response," 6, 14.

¹¹OECD, "Localising the Response," 6.

¹²OECD, "Localising the Response," 13-14.

¹³Lindsay Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, DIIS Working Paper 2009:18 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2009), 5.

¹⁴Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

¹⁵William D. Savedoff, *What Is "Country Ownership"? A Formal Exploration of the Aid Relationship*, CGD Working Paper 519 (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2019), 22, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/what-country-ownership-formal-exploration-aid-relationship>

¹⁶David Booth, *Aid Effectiveness: Bringing Country Ownership (and Politics) Back In*, ODI Working Paper 336 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2011), 15.

¹⁷Booth, *Aid Effectiveness*, 3.

¹⁸Gerry Helleiner, "Towards Balance in Aid Relationships: Donor Performance Monitoring in Low-Income Developing Countries," *Cooperation South*, no. 2 (2000), 22.

¹⁹Helleiner, "Towards Balance in Aid Relationships", 22; John H. Johnson and Sulaiman S. Wasty, *Borrower Ownership of Adjustment Programs and the Political Economy of Reform*, World Bank Discussion Paper 199 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1993), 1-2

recipients of the funds, should themselves define what external assistance they seek for, which should be based on the precise national goals they want to achieve.²⁰

Funding modality is one of the mechanisms through which localisation and ownership may be strengthened or constrained. The OECD DAC Recommendation calls on providers to increase the availability and accessibility of direct, flexible and predictable support, including core and programme-based support, in order to strengthen the financial independence, sustainability and local ownership of civil-society actors.²¹ It also calls for local CSOs to participate in decisions concerning programme design, budgets and implementation through relationships based on equal power.²² It is noticed that direct funding to local organizations can shorten the aid chain, reduce transaction links and allow programmes to be more grounded in local contexts, capacities and needs. Local CSOs' contextual knowledge and social connections may also improve the relevance of programming, extend access to diverse actors and reinforce accountability to their constituencies.²³

Ebrahim's analysis of NGO accountability provides an important theoretical basis for distinguishing upward and downward accountability in donor-funded civil-society projects. She presents NGOs as organisations that are simultaneously accountable to several constituencies: upward to donors, foundations and governments; downward to clients and communities affected by their activities; and internally to their own mission and staff.²⁴ This issue is important because donor accountability is commonly evident through financial reports, evaluations and compliance requirements, whereas community accountability is often less formalised.²⁵ Ebrahim observes that reporting practices emphasise upward accountability and devote considerably less attention to accountability towards local stakeholders. She also made significant difference between functional accountability, which focuses on resources, their use and immediate or short-term results, and strategic accountability, which considers the wider and longer-term effects of NGO activities on other organisations and the broader social and political environment. Functional accountability to donors through reports and accounts tends to be relatively strong, while strategic accountability and accountability towards communities are much weaker.²⁶ Researcher warns about the potential

²⁰ Helleiner, "Towards Balance in Aid Relationships", 22-23.

²¹ OECD, *DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance*, OECD/LEGAL/5021 (Paris: OECD, 2026), 8.

²² OECD, *DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society*, 8.

²³ OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries: Toolkit for Implementing the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance*, Best Practices in Development Co-operation (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023), 20, 24, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9ea40a9c-en>.

²⁴ Alnoor Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice: Mechanisms for NGOs," *World Development* 31, no. 5 (2003), 814-815., [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(03\)00014-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(03)00014-7).

²⁵ Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice," 815-818.

²⁶ Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice," 814-816.

consequences of too much upward accountability and too little downward accountability, arguing that downward mechanisms remain comparatively underdeveloped and that more balanced accountability would require a stronger role for communities in evaluating NGOs and for NGOs in evaluating funders.²⁷

For these reasons, EU CSO Thematic Programme highlights the importance of civil society and its empowerment. One of the programme's stated features is its ability to act independently without the consent of partner-country governments and other public authorities. This may enable the EU to support independent civil society where national governments restrict civic participation or are unwilling to support organisations engaged in rights, accountability or democratic governance.²⁸ However, bypassing government consent does not automatically transfer ownership to local CSOs or communities - it removes one potential source of state control, but the donor or an international intermediary may still retain authority over objectives, eligibility rules, budgets, indicators and approval procedures. This is a theoretical conclusion supported by Savedoff's finding that even in cases where donors and recipients agree on the objectives of an intervention, funding agreements can still distort recipients' decisions regarding resource allocation, steering them toward the priorities of the funders.²⁹ Lie also shows that discourse on ownership can coexist with silent donor control, in which donors retain the right to set the terms of the partnership and define the conditions under which recipients may exercise their supposed freedom.³⁰

EU normative influence and project-level mechanisms of dependency

The European Union's support for civil society cannot be analysed only as a transfer of financial resources because EU external action also promotes particular understandings of legitimate governance and development. Manners' theory of Normative Power Europe conceptualises the EU's international influence partly through its capacity to shape understandings of what is considered as normal, legitimate and desirable in international relations.³¹ Manners identifies peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights as the EU's principal normative foundations and identifies social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance as additional norms associated with its external identity.³²

²⁷Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice," 824.

²⁸European Commission, *Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations*, 10.

²⁹Savedoff, *What Is "Country Ownership"?*, 22-23.

³⁰Jon Harald Sande Lie, "Local Ownership as Global Governance," *The European Journal of Development Research* 31, no. 4 (2019), 1, 16-18, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-019-00203-9>.

³¹Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 239.

³²Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 242-243.

Therefore, the EU is presented as not only as a material or military actor, but also as an actor capable of contributing to the dissemination and redefinition of international norms.³³

However, “Normative Power Europe” should not be viewed as a theory of donor dependency. This does not in itself mean that a civil society organization receiving support from EU lacks autonomy. The relevance of Manners’ model to this thesis is that it identifies the normative content that is always embedded in EU funding strategies, calls for proposals, and the objectives of EU-funded projects themselves. Dependency becomes a separate issue related to whether local organizations remain capable of setting their own priorities, managing resources, and making implementation decisions within that normative framework. This distinction corresponds to before mentioned Whitfield’s distinction between ownership as control and the beneficiary’s obligation to comply with a policy or objective indicated in the programme/project (ownership as commitment).³⁴

The further development literature also questions whether donor-defined ideas of civil society can be applied in the same way across different political and social contexts. Fowler argues that international development actors often understand civil society through Western political and institutional experience which may not fully reflect the local needs and societies.³⁵ For example, donors may focus mainly on formal, urban and professionally organised NGOs, while giving less attention to rural, informal or traditional forms of civic organisation.³⁶ These arguments show that donor support may influence not only the activities carried out by CSOs, but also which types of organisations and functions donors recognise as legitimate forms of civil society. This risk is visible in the architecture of civil-society funding. According to the OECD statistics, funding for civil society actors in partner countries remains marginal: only 7 percent of OECD DAC members’ CSO funding goes directly to partner-country CSOs, while 93 percent goes to DAC-country or international CSOs. The OECD also identifies risk avoidance, mistrust, legal barriers, burdensome administrative requirements, restrictive funding and limited provider capacity as obstacles to funding local civil society actors directly.³⁷

AS it is noticed donor funding structures may unintentionally favour larger, professionalised NGOs that can manage complex application, monitoring and reporting requirements, while smaller

³³Manners, “Normative Power Europe,” 239.

³⁴Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

³⁵Alan Fowler, *Civil Society, NGOs and Social Development: Changing the Rules of the Game*, Geneva 2000 Occasional Paper No. 1 (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2000), vii, 6.

³⁶Fowler, *Civil Society, NGOs and Social Development*, 6-7.

³⁷OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 11, 13

and informal organisations face greater barriers to participation.³⁸ Banks, Hulme and Edwards argue that this can contribute to the professionalisation and technocratisation of civil society, making NGOs effective project implementers but potentially weakening their grassroots links, political role and capacity to pursue long-term social change.³⁹ These processes are often described as NGOisation and projectisation: civic activism becomes organised through formal NGOs, while CSO activities are increasingly structured around short-term, measurable donor-funded projects.⁴⁰ As a result, organisations may adjust their priorities to available funding calls, devote substantial resources to grant administration and direct accountability mainly towards donors rather than communities.⁴¹ The OECD distinction between funding “to” and “through” CSOs helps explain this problem: funding “to” CSOs means that donor supports CSOs own programmes, whereas funding “through” CSOs means using CSOs to implement donor-initiated activities.⁴² However, this distinction is not absolute, because indirect funding may still allow local decision-making, while direct grants may remain highly restricted by donor-defined priorities and conditions.⁴³

Given such criticism about the donor’s influence, it could be observed that EU values and its funding requirements should not be transferred to Africa or any region whatsoever. But the central problem is therefore not that the values promoted by the EU are necessarily inappropriate. The relevant problem is whether the EU’s normative and financial priorities displace locally defined agendas or reduce local organisations’ authority over how shared objectives are interpreted and pursued. A CSO’s use of EU terminology or support for EU values is not sufficient evidence of dependency because similar objectives may be genuinely rooted in the organisation’s own mission. Evidence of dependency requires demonstrating that continued access to essential resources, organisational survival or decision-making space is conditioned by compliance with externally controlled priorities, procedures or project formats.

Relationship between ownership and dependency

According to the literature, local ownership and donor dependency describe different aspects of a donor-funded projects. Ownership concerns the degree to which recipient actors exercise control over project priorities, design and implementation, rather than simply supporting or

³⁸Janice Giffen and Ruth Judge, *Civil Society Policy and Practice in Donor Agencies: An Overview Report Commissioned by DFID* (Oxford: INTRAC, 2010), 15-17.

³⁹Nicola Banks, David Hulme, and Michael Edwards, “NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited: Still Too Close for Comfort?”, *World Development* 66 (2015), 710, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.09.028>.

⁴⁰Stephen Meyers, “NGO-Ization and Human Rights Law: The CRPD’s Civil Society Mandate,” *Laws* 5, no. 2 (2016), 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws5020021>; Adriano Campolina and Ben Phillips, “Projectisation of Donor Funding: Implications for CSO Sustainability,” in *State of Civil Society Report 2015* (Johannesburg: CIVICUS, 2015), 2-3.

⁴¹Campolina et al, “Projectisation of Donor Funding,” 2-3.

⁴²OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24.

⁴³OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24.

participating in an externally designed interventions.⁴⁴ Dependency, by contrast, according to the literature, concerns the extent to which activities or organisational functions rely on external resources for continuation or survival.⁴⁵

The relationship between the two concepts should not be understood as a simple choice between ownership and dependency. Whitfield argues that receiving high levels of aid does not necessarily lead to a loss of ownership because the degree of recipient control also depends on the political, institutional and other contexts in which aid is negotiated.⁴⁶ Castel-Branco similarly describes ownership as a contest over the power to influence policy decisions and implementation, while aid dependency forms part of the context in which this contest occurs. He also argues that an aid-dependent development path may sometimes result from strategic choices made by recipient actors, although those choices are exercised within unequal and restricted conditions.⁴⁷ So, according to the literature, dependency can therefore limit the available choices without completely removing local participation or ownership.

This creates the central dilemma examined in this thesis. External funding can strengthen local organisations by providing resources, expertise, organisational capacity and opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable, while the continuation of the same activities may become dependent on that external support. A local CSO may exercise meaningful control over project priorities and implementation but remain unable to continue the project after EU funding ends, in contrary, a CSO may have little influence over a donor-designed project without being strongly dependent on it where the grant is small, temporary or replaceable. So, according to the authors it could be said that ownership and dependency may therefore be associated and one interacts with another.

Funding arrangements can influence this relationship. It is worth mentioning again the OECD separation between funding “to” CSOs, which supports programmes developed and implemented under their own authority, and funding “through” CSOs, which normally finances donor-initiated and earmarked interventions.⁴⁸ It is noticed that funding “to” CSOs (core funding) is generally more supportive of ownership because it gives organisations greater control over resource allocation and

⁴⁴Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5; Johnson and Wasty, *Borrower Ownership of Adjustment Programs*, 1; Göran Hyden, “After the Paris Declaration: Taking on the Issue of Power,” *Development Policy Review* 26, no. 3 (2008): 259.

⁴⁵Robert Lensink and Howard White, *Aid Dependence: Issues and Indicators*, EGDI Study 1999:2 (Stockholm: Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1999), 12-13; Deborah Bräutigam, *Aid Dependence and Governance*, EGDI Study 2000:1 (Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, 2000), 9.

⁴⁶Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 6.

⁴⁷Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, *Aid Dependency and Development: A Question of Ownership? A Critical View*, Working Paper no. 01/2008 (Maputo: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos [IESE], 2008), 6.

⁴⁸OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24.

enables them to follow their own mandates and strategic plans. Multi-year and flexible funding may also improve organisational stability, staff retention and sustainability.⁴⁹ However, funding modality should not be treated as direct proof of either ownership or dependency. Funding through a CSO can range from strongly donor-directed arrangements to jointly designed programmes that provide substantial local discretion. Similarly, direct or core funding can still contain restrictive conditions, and its effect depends on how resources are controlled.⁵⁰ The empirical analysis must therefore examine the actual distribution of authority, resources and responsibilities rather than classifying projects only according to their formal funding category.

Taken together, the literature shows different approaches of local ownership and donor dependency dimensions, but most of them agrees that ownership should be strengthened and dependency - reduced. While existing studies explain how donor funding, conditionality, intermediary structures and project-based support can influence recipient autonomy, much of this literature focuses on aid relations at the country or government level rather than on how these dynamics operate within individual development cooperation civil-society projects. Building on this gap, the purpose of this thesis is to examine selected EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa and assess how, and to what extent, their design and funding arrangements enable local CSOs ownership while creating or mitigating donor dependency.

Objective and tasks of the thesis

The objective of this thesis is to examine *how, and to what extent, the design and funding arrangements of selected EU-funded civil-society projects in African countries enable local civil-society organisation ownership while creating or mitigating project-level donor dependency.*

To achieve this objective, the thesis will:

1. Define local CSOs ownership and project-level donor dependency and explain how these concepts apply to EU-funded civil-society projects.
2. Develop an analytical framework that treats local ownership and donor dependency as separate but interacting dimensions.
3. Operationalise local ownership and donor dependency through defined concrete indicators.
4. Select EU-funded civil-society projects in African countries according to criteria, including geographical context, project sector, funding modality, implementation structure and the role assigned to local CSOs.

⁴⁹OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24-25.

⁵⁰OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24-25.

5. Examine the projects and assess the level of local ownership and donor dependency in each selected project and position the projects within the ownership-dependency matrix.
6. Compare the selected projects to identify recurring patterns and the mechanisms through which project arrangements strengthen local ownership, reproduce dependency or allow (if possible) ownership and dependency to coexist.
7. Develop conclusions, suggestions for further research and recommendations for improving the design, funding arrangements, partnership structures and sustainability of future EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa.

Approach

The thesis will use a comparative case-study approach to examine selected EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa. The research question will be answered by assessing each project through the ownership and dependency indicators developed from the literature review and theoretical framework. The projects will be scored separately on both dimensions and then positioned within the ownership-dependency matrix in order to compare how different project design and funding arrangements are associated with different combinations of local ownership and donor dependency. The analysis will focus particularly on factors such as local participation in decision-making, control over resources, funding arrangements, intermediary involvement, reporting requirements, the sustainability of project activities and other indicators.

The analysis is guided by the expectation that projects giving local CSOs greater influence over priorities, decisions and resources will demonstrate stronger local ownership, while projects characterised by greater reliance on external funding, intermediaries or donor-controlled systems will demonstrate stronger donor dependency. At the same time, the thesis does not assume that ownership and dependency are mutually exclusive, since projects may display high levels of both.

Relevance

Local ownership is widely recognised as an important principle of effective development cooperation, yet externally funded civil-society projects in a way continue to operate within relationships characterised by unequal access to financial resources, lack of trust, complex reporting requirements, and donors decision-making power.⁵¹ Existing literature (Whitfield, Castel-Branco) shows that external assistance can provide resources, technical support and institutional capacity that enable recipient actors to implement programmes and activities that might otherwise be

⁵¹OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 7, 9, 17, 31; OECD, *Pathways Towards Effective Locally Led Development Co-operation: Learning by Example* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), 11, 36, <https://doi.org/10.1787/51079bba-en>.

difficult to sustain, while continued reliance on such assistance may simultaneously increase donor influence over priorities, procedures and access to resources.⁵² It is important to understand this relationship and to test it practically because if strengthening local ownership does not necessarily require the complete absence of external dependency, and dependency does not automatically mean that local actors have no meaningful control over a project, the key question becomes not whether dependency or ownership exists within the programme/project, but how it shapes local actors' ability to influence decisions, set priorities, and exercise meaningful control over project implementation.

The research also contributes to the literature by examining ownership and dependency at the project and local CSOs level. Much of the established aid-effectiveness literature discusses ownership and aid dependency at the level of partner countries, governments and national development strategies. This thesis applies these concepts to individual EU-funded development cooperation civil-society projects in Africa and examines ownership and dependency as two separate but interacting dimensions. The ownership-dependency matrix therefore makes it possible to identify projects in which strong local ownership may coexist with substantial financial or technical dependency, as well as projects where low dependency does not necessarily correspond to strong local ownership.

The African context makes this question particularly relevant. Civil-society organisations in many African countries operate in environments characterised by limited domestic funding opportunities, political or legal restrictions on civic activity and significant reliance on international development assistance⁵³. External funding can therefore provide important resources, institutional support and opportunities for civil-society participation, but it may also increase vulnerability to changes in donor priorities or funding availability. At the same time, African countries and civil-society environments differ substantially,⁵⁴ making it important to examine how these relationships operate in specific projects rather than assuming that external assistance has the same effects across the whole continent.

Finally, the research has practical relevance for EU development cooperation. The EU explicitly aims to strengthen civil-society organisations as independent development and

⁵²Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5,9; Castel-Branco, *Aid Dependency and Development*, 14-15, 37, 46-47.

⁵³Niloufer Memon, Julia Standish-White, Nkanyiso Hlongwa, Dominique Wells, Mikal Kooiker, and Bradley Seeman, *How African NGOs Grow* (The Bridgespan Group, June 2024), 3-4, <https://www.bridgespan.org/getmedia/be083540-199c-46b2-a14c-db35e6b237af/how-African-ngos-grow-2024.pdf?ext=.pdf>.

⁵⁴David Lewis, "Civil Society in African Contexts: Reflections on the Usefulness of a Concept," *Development and Change* 33, no. 4 (2002): 577-580, 584, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00270>.

governance actors and increasingly emphasises partnership and local participation.⁵⁵ Examining how actual project design and funding arrangements distribute resources, responsibilities and decision-making power can help identify which mechanisms support meaningful local ownership and which may unintentionally reinforce donor dependency. The findings may therefore contribute to discussions on direct and indirect funding, intermediary roles, project duration, budget flexibility, reporting requirements, and sustainability in future EU support to civil society.

Structure of the work

The thesis is organised into 4 main sections. The first section presents the theoretical framework. It discusses local ownership, localisation and project-level donor dependency in development cooperation, as well as EU normative influence, civil-society funding arrangements and project-level mechanisms that may affect both dimensions. Based on this, the section defines the concepts used in the thesis, introduces the ownership-dependency matrix and develops the ownership and dependency indicators that guides the empirical analysis.

The second section explains the research methodology. It describes the comparative case-study design, the selection of EU-funded civil-society projects, the sources of data and the scoring framework used to assess ownership and dependency. It also explains how the indicators are applied and how the projects are compared.

The third section presents and analyses the selected EU-funded civil-society projects. Each project is assessed according to the ownership and dependency indicators and positioned within the ownership-dependency matrix. The section then compares the cases to identify patterns in how funding arrangements, decision-making structures, intermediary involvement, reporting requirements and other project-design features enable local ownership or create and mitigate donor dependency.

The fourth section discusses the main findings in relation to the theoretical framework and research question. It considers what the comparison reveals about the relationship between ownership and dependency, including the conditions under which (if possible) both may coexist within the same project. The thesis concludes by summarising the main findings, identifying the limitations of the research and providing recommendations for the design and funding of future EU-supported civil-society projects as well as suggestions for further research.

⁵⁵European Commission, *Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations* 1, 11

1. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section develops the theoretical and conceptual framework used to analyse the selected EU-funded civil-society projects. It first explains the African context and then defines local ownership and project-level donor dependency as two separate but interacting analytical dimensions. Drawing on the literature on localisation, funding arrangements, projectisation, accountability and intermediary organisations, the section identifies the mechanisms through which ownership and dependency may be strengthened or constrained and brings these dimensions together in the ownership-dependency matrix used in the empirical analysis.

This thesis analyses EU-funded civil society projects through the relationship between local ownership and donor dependency. The purpose of the framework is to examine how project design and implementation structures, the power relationship between donors, intermediary organisations and local civil society organisations shape the degree of ownership exercised by implementing CSOs. The framework therefore treats ownership and dependency as two related but not fully opposite dimensions. The thesis does not assume that EU funding is automatically empowering or automatically dependency-producing. Instead, it examines how specific project-level mechanisms structure the ownership-dependency balance.

1.1. Theoretical lens

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is drawn from the literature on local ownership, aid dependency, localisation and donor-recipient relations discussed in the literature review. From this literature, 2 main analytical dimensions are identified: local ownership and project-level donor dependency. Additional concepts, including localisation, EU normative influence, projectisation and accountability, are used to explain mechanisms through which ownership and dependency may be strengthened or constrained. **The central theoretical proposition of this thesis is therefore that ownership and dependency are related but analytically distinct dimensions rather than opposite ends.** This distinction is necessary because as per academic literature, receiving external aid does not in itself imply a lack of autonomy or the existence of dependence.⁵⁶ The analytical task is not only to determine whether a project is “local” or “donor-driven,” but also to identify who controls key decisions and which parts of the project remain dependent on resources controlled by external actors.

Local ownership

Local ownership is used as the first principal theoretical lens. The starting point is Whitfield’s distinction between ownership as commitment and ownership as control. Commitment refers to the

⁵⁶Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 6.

willingness of recipients to support and implement particular policies or programmes, whereas control concerns their ability to influence their formulation and implementation.⁵⁷ This distinction is particularly important for the analysis of donor-funded civil-society projects. A local CSO may strongly support the objectives of an EU-funded action, participate actively in its implementation or successfully fulfil contractual requirements without necessarily having had significant influence over the priorities, budget or institutional structure of the project. For this reason, ownership in this thesis is conceptualised primarily in terms of decision-making authority rather than participation alone. The analytical question is not simply whether local organisations are present, consulted or described as partners, but whether they have meaningful opportunities to determine what is done, how it is done and how resources are used.

The concept of localisation supplements this understanding of ownership. Localisation literature emphasises the transfer of leadership, resources and decision-making authority to actors in the countries and communities where development interventions take place.⁵⁸ Applied to civil-society projects, localisation should occur at different stages of the project cycle including needs assessment, programme design, budget planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.⁵⁹ However, localisation should not be treated as synonymous with ownership. A project can localise implementation by transferring activities to local CSOs without transferring strategic authority. Similarly, local organisations can receive grants while the principal budget, contractual relationship and reporting framework remain externally controlled. This distinction leads to an important theoretical expectation of the thesis: local adaptation and local implementation may develop more easily than strategic local control. A project may therefore appear highly localised at the operational level while remaining externally structured at the strategic or financial level. Ownership should consequently be examined across different forms of authority rather than being determined based on the geographical location of implementation or the nationality of implementing organisations.

Donor dependency

Donor dependency is used as the second principal theoretical lens. As with ownership, dependency cannot be determined simply from the existence of external funding. Lensink and White explicitly point out that large aid flows are not proof of aid dependency. Rather, dependency concerns a situation in which an important objective cannot be achieved without continued aid for the foreseeable future.⁶⁰ The Bräutigam similarly links aid dependency to the inability of recipients

⁵⁷Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

⁵⁸OECD, "Localising the Response," 6, 13-14.

⁵⁹OECD, "Localising the Response," 6.

⁶⁰Lensink et al, *Aid Dependence*, 12-13.

to perform important functions without external financing or expertise.⁶¹ Building on these broader definitions, this thesis narrows the concept to documented project-level donor dependency. It does not seek to determine whether a local CSO as an organisation could survive without EU or other external funding. Instead, it examines the extent to which project-supported activities, access to resources and implementation opportunities are structured around externally controlled funding and institutional arrangements. Applied at the project level, dependency therefore concerns what functions would be difficult to continue without external support and the extent to which access to that support remains shaped by donors or intermediary organisations. Financial reliance is one element of this relationship, while donor-defined priorities, project-based funding, intermediary structures, reporting requirements and externally controlled procedures are treated as mechanisms that may create, maintain or mitigate such reliance.⁶² A local CSO may, for example, rely on external finance to continue project-supported activities or retain project staff, while access to those resources may simultaneously depend on an international intermediary, repeated grant cycles, contractual procedures or donor reporting requirements. The dependency analysed in this thesis should therefore be understood as donor-structured dependency at the project level, rather than as a measurement of the overall financial dependency of the CSO.

Relationship between ownership and dependency

The relationship between ownership and dependency is shaped through concrete funding and implementation arrangements. Several concepts discussed in the literature therefore serve as mechanisms connecting the two principal dimensions.

First, **funding can be provided “to” or “through” civil-society organisations**. The OECD distinguishes support provided to CSOs for their own programmes and institutional objectives from funding channelled through CSOs for the implementation of donor-initiated activities. Funding “to” CSOs may provide greater organisational freedom of action, whereas funding “through” CSOs may position them primarily as implementing agents. Nevertheless, this distinction is not absolute: direct funding may still contain restrictive donor conditions, while indirect funding may sometimes provide significant local decision-making space.⁶³

Second, **projectisation may affect both dependency and ownership**. Short-term grants organised around predefined outputs, indicators and reporting periods may encourage organisations to structure their activities around available funding opportunities rather than longer-term

⁶¹Bräutigam, *Aid Dependence and Governance*, 9.

⁶²Bräutigam, *Aid Dependence and Governance*, 6–9, 39–41; OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 20–25, 29.

⁶³OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24.

organisational priorities.⁶⁴ Projectisation can therefore create reliance on repeated funding cycles while narrowing the space for their own local strategic work.⁶⁵ Banks, Hulme and Edwards similarly highlight the risk that donor-funded NGOs become increasingly professionalised project implementers while their longer-term political and grassroots roles receive less attention.⁶⁶

Third, **accountability relationships affect the direction in which CSOs respond to different stakeholders.** Ebrahim distinguishes upward accountability to donors from downward accountability to communities and internal accountability to organisations themselves.⁶⁷ She also distinguishes functional accountability, focused primarily on resources and short-term results, from strategic accountability concerned with longer-term organisational and social change.⁶⁸ It is also important to highlight that donor reporting is necessary for the responsible use of public funds and should not automatically be interpreted as dependency. However, where reporting, audits and indicators directed towards donors are strongly institutionalised while mechanisms through which communities can influence or evaluate CSOs remain comparatively weak, accountability may therefore become disproportionately donor oriented.⁶⁹

Fourth, the literature suggests that **intermediary organisations can both mitigate and reproduce project-level dependency.**⁷⁰ International NGOs, EU Member State development agencies and other intermediary organisations can facilitate access to funding, manage administrative requirements, share risks and provide non-financial or technical support to local CSOs. It is noticed that indirect funding through intermediaries does not necessarily overcome the structural barriers to direct donor–local CSO relationships and may reproduce existing power imbalances.⁷¹ Where intermediaries retain substantial authority over funding allocation, partner selection, administrative procedures and other important decisions, local organisations may remain dependent on externally controlled structures even when they participate actively in project implementation.⁷² Manners’ theory of Normative Power Europe provides an additional, but supplementary, perspective. Manners argues that the EU exercises international influence partly through its ability to shape conceptions of what constitutes legitimate or appropriate behaviour, promoting norms including peace, democracy, rule of law, human rights and good governance.⁷³ This is relevant because EU-funded civil-society programmes are not normatively neutral: calls for

⁶⁴Meyers, *NGO-ization and Human Rights Law*, 1.

⁶⁵Campolina et al, *Projectisation of Donor Funding: Implications for CSO Sustainability*, 2-3.

⁶⁶Banks et al, “NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited,” 710.

⁶⁷Ebrahim, “Accountability in Practice,” 814-815.

⁶⁸Ebrahim, “Accountability in Practice,” 815.

⁶⁹Ebrahim, “Accountability in Practice,” 824.

⁷⁰OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 20-23, 26-27.

⁷¹OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 26-28.

⁷²OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 20-22.

⁷³Manners, “Normative Power Europe,” 249.

proposals and project objectives are embedded within broader EU political and development priorities. However, Normative Power Europe is not a theory of donor dependency, and agreement with EU-promoted values should not be interpreted as evidence of dependency. The theory rather helps explain the normative environment in which EU-funded CSO projects are formulated.

1.2. Ownership-dependency matrix

Based on these theoretical distinctions presented above, this thesis treats local ownership and donor dependency as two separate dimensions. Combining them produces four possible project configurations. The matrix is an analytical framework developed for this thesis from the theoretical concepts of ownership and project-level dependency.

The axes are deliberately separated because the literature provides no theoretical basis for assuming that an increase in ownership must automatically generate an equivalent reduction in dependency. The framework developed in this thesis therefore treats ownership and dependency as two interrelated dimensions rather than a single continuous spectrum ranging from donor dependency to local ownership.

Table 1. Ownership-dependency matrix (source: author)

	<i>Low local ownership</i>	<i>High local ownership</i>
<i>High donor dependency</i>	1. Donor-controlled and dependent Local CSOs mainly implement externally defined activities (funding “through” SCOs) and have limited authority over project design, resources or adaptation. At the same time, project activities, staff or organisational functions would be difficult to maintain without continuing donor finance, expertise or intermediary support.	2. Locally led but externally dependent Local CSOs meaningfully shape priorities, design and implementation and retain authority to adapt the project. However, the continuation of the project or related organisational activities remains dependent on EU finance, reporting requirements, external expertise or specialised systems that cannot easily be replaced.
<i>Low donor dependency</i>	3. Donor-directed but non-essential Local CSOs have limited influence over the project, but the funding is not central to their organisational survival or long-term activities. The project	4. Locally led and relatively autonomous Local CSOs shape priorities, control important decisions and resources, adapt activities to local conditions and remain accountable to their constituencies. Their

	could end without seriously affecting the organisation, or its resources could be replaced relatively easily.	activities are supported by diversified or replaceable resources and are not dependent on one donor for their continuation.
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These four configurations are ideal types rather than assumptions that every empirical project must perfectly correspond to one category. Their purpose is to clarify the theoretical relationship between ownership and dependency. The first configuration represents the clearest combination of donor control and dependency: local CSOs possess limited decision-making authority while relying heavily on external support. The second configuration is central to the argument of this thesis because it suggests that meaningful local ownership can coexist with substantial financial or technical dependency. The third configuration shows that low dependency does not automatically mean strong ownership, since a donor may control a project that is nevertheless marginal to the recipient organisation. The fourth configuration comes closest to the objectives of localisation, although “relative autonomy” should not be confused with complete financial independence from all external actors. From the first glance it could be said that the fourth configuration should be desirable to reach for all the programmes/projects.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section explains the methodological approach used to compare the 10 selected EU-funded and EU co-funded civil-society projects. It outlines the comparative qualitative case-study design, case-selection criteria, documentary data sources, operationalisation of local ownership and project-level donor dependency, and the scoring procedure used to structure the analysis. The section also explains how qualitative evidence is coded and compared across cases and discusses the main limitations arising from the use of publicly available documentation.

2.1. Research design

This thesis uses a comparative qualitative case-study design supported by a structured scoring framework. The analysis focuses on 10 selected EU-funded or EU co-funded civil-society projects in Africa and examines how their design, funding structures and implementation arrangements shape 2 analytical dimensions: local CSOs ownership and project-level donor dependency.

The study is based primarily on qualitative document analysis. The scoring framework is used to make the assessment of the selected projects more systematic and transparent and to enable comparison across cases.

The research is conducted in 3 main stages. First, relevant documentation for each selected project is collected and qualitatively analysed. Second, the evidence is assessed through the

ownership and dependency indicators developed from the theoretical literature. Third, the resulting scores and qualitative findings are compared across projects and used to identify and analyse the patterns as well as position the cases within the ownership-dependency matrix.

2.2. Case selection and data

The empirical analysis covers 10 EU-funded development cooperation civil-society projects in Africa. Projects are selected according to 4 main criteria. First, the project must be funded or co-funded by the European Union. Second, civil-society support or the participation of local CSOs must constitute an important part of the intervention. Third, sufficient publicly available documentation must exist to enable project-level analysis. Fourth, the project must provide information that allows the examination of mechanisms related to ownership and dependency, including funding structures, partnership arrangements, decision-making, implementation and others.

The projects collectively cover an implementation period from 2015 to 2028. The selected cases were intended to include both completed projects and projects that were still ongoing at the time of the research. Completed projects provide the advantage of more developed documentation, including final evaluations and evidence concerning the full implementation cycle, while ongoing projects make it possible to examine more recent approaches to EU civil-society support and project design. The cases also vary in implementation duration. Most projects or project phases run for approximately 3 to 5 years. This variation was useful because the study did not seek to examine only one standard type of EU-funded intervention. Including projects of different durations and at different stages of implementation increased the diversity of the sample and created greater scope for identifying whether similar or different ownership and dependency patterns emerge under different project arrangements. In particular, it allows the analysis to consider whether longer implementation periods are associated with stronger institutional development and sustainability mechanisms, or whether projectisation and donor-structured dependency may remain present even within relatively long programmes.

The study relies mainly on publicly available documentary sources because access to internal project documentation may be limited. Relevant materials may include EU calls for proposals, action documents, project descriptions, logical frameworks, grant guidelines, implementation documents, progress or final reports, evaluations, implementing-partner publications, local CSO publications and project websites. These materials will be used to identify how local organisations are positioned within each project, how priorities are established, how financial resources are distributed, how decisions are made, what reporting requirements exist.

2.3. Geographical scope and case-selection rationale

Africa is selected as the geographical focus of this thesis because the continent occupies an important place in both the academic literature on aid relationships and the EU's external cooperation. Much of the literature on ownership and aid dependency has developed through studies of African donor-recipient relations. Whitfield's comparative research examines Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia and identifies considerable differences in the degree of control that recipient governments exercise over development policies and aid-funded programmes.⁷⁴ Her findings show that high levels of external assistance do not automatically produce weak ownership, because recipient control also depends on politics, institutional capacity, economic conditions and bargaining relations with donors.⁷⁵ African cases are therefore particularly relevant for examining why similar forms of external support may produce different combinations of ownership and dependency.

The selection is also justified by the scale and political importance of cooperation between the African Union and the European Union. The AU-EU Joint Vision for 2030 describes the relationship as a renewed partnership based on sovereignty, mutual respect, mutual accountability, shared values, equality between partners and mutual commitments.⁷⁶ The partnership covers health, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, peace and security, economic development and growth, migration, climate action, sustainable investments and other areas that are frequently addressed through EU-funded programmes.⁷⁷ The Joint Vision also recognises contributions from civil society, young people, local authorities and the private sector and encourages their continued participation in the partnership.⁷⁸ This formal commitment to equality and participation makes it important to examine whether similar principles are reflected in the actual design and implementation of EU-funded civil-society projects.

The role of external civil-society support is especially important where domestic political conditions restrict the ability of local organisations to operate independently. The 2025 CIVICUS Monitor reports that 44 of 50 countries and territories in Africa south of the Sahara are rated as having obstructed, repressed or closed civic space, while more than 80% of the region's population lives in countries where civic space is repressed or closed.⁷⁹ These conditions can make external support important for organisations working on human rights, democratic participation,

⁷⁴Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

⁷⁵Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 6.

⁷⁶African Union and European Union, "6th European Union-African Union Summit: A Joint Vision for 2030," February 18, 2022, 1, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20220218/6th-european-union-african-union-summit-joint-vision-2030>.

⁷⁷African Union and European Union, "A Joint Vision for 2030" 2-5.

⁷⁸African Union and European Union, "A Joint Vision for 2030" 5.

⁷⁹CIVICUS Monitor, "Africa," *People Power Under Attack* 2025, 2025, https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2025/africa/.

accountability and other sensitive issues. At the same time, restricted civic space in this case could be even more sensitive meaning that it may make such support politically sensitive, as visible links with foreign donors can expose CSOs to additional scrutiny, administrative restrictions, political pressure or accusations of representing foreign interests.⁸⁰ Financial constraints may further increase the importance of external support since according to the 2024 study of NGOs in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa found that most organisations interviewed relied heavily on funding from outside Africa, reflecting the limited availability of domestic government and philanthropic resources⁸¹ and potentially increasing organisational dependence on external donors.

Africa should not, however, be treated as a single or homogeneous case. Countries differ substantially in their political systems, civic-space conditions, donor relationships, institutional capacities, historical experiences and domestic funding opportunities. Whitfield's findings themselves show substantial variation in ownership among the 8 African countries studied, ranging from relatively strong recipient control in Botswana and Ethiopia to considerably weaker ownership in Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia.⁸² The purpose of selecting projects from Africa is therefore not to claim that one common African ownership-dependency pattern exists, but to compare how different political and project conditions shape the relationship between local CSOs and EU funding.

Taken together, these conditions, relevance and important make Africa a particularly relevant setting for examining the relationship between local ownership and donor dependency in EU-funded civil-society support.

2.4. Operationalisation of local ownership and donor dependency

The theoretical concepts of local ownership and donor dependency are operationalised through 2 separate sets of indicators derived from the theoretical concepts.

Ownership indicators:

Table 2. Ownership indicators (source: author)

	Indicators	Definition
1	Local priority-setting	Local CSOs help define what the project should focus on
2	Decision-making power	Local CSOs can influence decisions during implementation
3	Control or access to resources	Local CSOs can directly access or manage funding
4	Adaptation to local context	Activities respond to local needs, political context and CSO

⁸⁰OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 22.

⁸¹Memon et al., *How African NGOs Grow*, 4-5.

⁸²Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

		capacities
5	Community accountability	CSOs remain accountable to their members, constituencies and communities, not only to donors
6	Equal partnership	Local CSOs are treated as partners with mutual accountability and responsibility of project success

Together, these indicators assess the extent to which local CSOs influence what the project does, participate in meaningful decisions, exercise control over resources, shape activities according to local conditions, remain accountable to their constituencies and operate as substantive partners rather than only as implementing organisations.

Dependency indicators:

Table 3. Dependency indicators (source: author)

	Indicators	Definition
1	Donor-defined priorities	Project priorities mainly follow EU/donor strategies rather than locally defined CSO agendas
2	Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	CSOs are used as channels for donor objectives rather than supported in their own institutional mission
3	Short-term projectisation	CSO work is organised around short-term projects, outputs, indicators and donor timelines, without the sustainability factor after project ends
4	Competitive funding culture	Funding encourages CSOs to compete for donor grants instead of building cooperation
5	Upward accountability to donors	CSOs are mainly accountable to donors through reports and pre-defined indicators
6	Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	Funding is received by the international or member country SCOs rather than local and grassroots SCOs

These indicators are used to examine the extent to which project structures orient local organisations towards donor priorities, project cycles, externally controlled resources and accountability requirements rather than towards their own organisational strategies and constituencies.

Scoring procedure

Each indicator is assessed on a four-point scale:

- N.e. - no evidence of the respective ownership/dependency feature;

- 1 - weak evidence;
- 2 - partial, formal or mixed evidence;
- 3 - strong and clear evidence.

Each indicator will be scored from 1 to 3. An indication of N.e. shows no publicly available evidence, 1 - weak evidence in the available public documents, a score of 2 indicates partial, formal or mixed evidence, and a score of 3 indicates strong and clear evidence. Since each dimension includes 6 indicators, the maximum score for local ownership is 18 points and the maximum score for donor dependency is also 18 points.

The projects will be evaluated according to the following definitions of each score and indicator:

Table 4. Ownership indicators' scoring (source: author)

	Ownership indicator	Definition	N.e. - no evidence	1 - Low ownership evidence	2 - Partial/ formal ownership evidence	3 - strong ownership evidence
1	Local priority-setting	Local CSOs help define what the project should focus on.	No publicly available data.	Priorities are mainly defined by the EU (donor), donor strategy or call for proposals. No clear evidence that local CSOs shaped priorities.	Local CSOs were consulted, but the main priorities appear already pre-defined by the donor/project.	Local CSOs clearly contributed to identifying needs, priorities or project focus. Project priorities reflect locally defined agendas.
2	Decision-making power	Local CSOs can influence decisions during implementation.		Decisions appear controlled by donor, international lead or intermediary organisation.	Local CSOs participate in meetings or consultations, but decision-making role is unclear or limited.	Local CSOs have clear decision-making roles, for example in steering committees, work planning, governance structures or budget decisions.
3	Control or access to resources	Local CSOs can directly access or manage funding.		Local CSOs do not directly manage fund, resources are controlled externally.	Local CSOs receive sub-grants or activity funding, but with limited control or flexibility.	Local CSOs directly receive, manage or significantly influence the use of funds.
4	Adaptation to local context	Activities respond to local needs, political context and CSOs capacities.		Activities appear generic or donor-template based, with little local contextualisation.	Some adaptation to local context is visible, but activities remain mainly standardised.	Project design clearly reflects local needs, civic space, political context, CSO capacity and locally specific challenges.
5	Community accountability	CSOs remain accountable to their members, constituencies and communities, not only to donors.		Accountability is mainly donor-facing through reports, indicators and compliance.	Some beneficiary consultation or feedback is mentioned, but mechanisms are weak or unclear.	Clear community accountability mechanisms exist, such as constituency feedback, public reporting, community validation, local monitoring or member

						involvement.
6	Equal partnership	Local CSOs are treated as partners, not only as service providers.		Local CSOs are described mainly as beneficiaries, recipients, target groups or service providers.	Local CSOs are called partners, but power-sharing is unclear.	Local CSOs are clearly treated as co-implementers, co-designers or equal partners with recognised roles and responsibilities.
Maximum possible score - 18						

Table 5. Dependency indicators' scoring (source: author)

	Dependency indicator	Definition	N.e. - no evidence	1 - Low dependency evidence	2 - Partial/ mixed dependency evidence	3 - strong dependency evidence
1	Donor-defined priorities	Project priorities mainly follow EU (donor) strategies rather than locally defined CSO agendas.	No publicly available data	Priorities clearly come from local CSO needs, local strategies or participatory problem analysis.	Priorities combine donor strategies with some local needs or consultations.	Priorities mainly reflect EU (donor) thematic areas, calls, indicators or external strategies, with weak evidence of local agenda-setting.
2	Support "through" CSOs instead of support "to" CSOs	CSOs are used as channels for donor objectives rather than supported in their own institutional mission.		Funding strengthens CSOs' own mandate, strategy, institutional capacity or core functions.	Funding partly supports CSO capacity but remains mostly activity/project based.	Funding is mainly channelled through CSOs to implement donor-defined outputs and activities.
3	Short-term projectisation	CSO work is organised around short-term projects, outputs, indicators and donor timelines.		Project supports long-term institutional development, strategic capacity or multi-year sustainability.	Project includes both short-term activities and some longer-term capacity or sustainability elements.	Project is mainly focused on short-term outputs, trainings, events, deliverables, indicators and project-cycle logic.
4	Competitive funding culture	Funding encourages CSOs to compete for donor grants instead of building cooperation.		Funding model encourages collaboration, coalitions, networks or joint local agenda-setting.	Some cooperation exists, but funding is still distributed through competitive calls or fragmented grants.	Competitive calls dominate and may favour larger/professionalised CSOs over smaller or grassroots actors.
5	Upward accountability to donors	CSOs are mainly accountable to donors through reports and indicators rather than to communities.		Accountability to communities, members or constituencies is clearly visible.	Both donor reporting and some community feedback/accountability mechanisms are present.	Accountability is mainly upward to donors through reporting, indicators, audits, visibility and compliance.
6	Funding for international	Funding is received by		Local CSOs are direct recipients or	Funding is shared between local	Main funding is controlled by

or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	the international or member country SCOs rather than local and grassroots SCOs		lead organisations.	actors and international/intermediary organisations.	international NGOs, EU Member State organisations, agencies or other intermediaries, while local CSOs receive limited or indirect support.
Maximum possible score - 18					

The numerical scores will therefore be used as a comparative analytical tool and interpreted together with the qualitative evidence collected from project documents.

2.5. Data analysis

The analysis begins with a qualitative reading of the available documentation for each project. Particular attention is paid to evidence concerning the role of donor/implementing partner organizations/partners and assigned role to local CSOs. This includes whether they appear as lead organisations, co-designers, partners, sub-grantees, implementers, beneficiaries or consultation actors. Project documents are also examined for information concerning priority-setting, decision-making structures, funding channels, budget management, reporting requirements, local adaptation, intermediary involvement and sustainability arrangements according to the developed ownership and dependency indicators (*Tables 2,3,4,5*).

Relevant evidence is then coded according to the 12 ownership and dependency indicators. Each indicator receives a score from 1 to 3 where sufficient evidence exists, together with a short qualitative justification.

For comparative purposes, the results may be interpreted as:

Table 6. scoring interpretation (source: author)

Total score	Interpretation
1 - 6	Low
7 - 12	Medium
13 - 18	High

The ownership and dependency dimensions are calculated separately.

The resulting scores will be used to position each project within an ownership-dependency matrix (*Table 1*). Projects with low ownership and high dependency will be classified as donor - driven implementation. Projects with high ownership and high dependency will be classified as participatory but dependent. Projects with low ownership and low dependency will be classified as

cases with a weak CSO role but not dependent. Projects with high ownership and low dependency will be classified as locally owned support. Projects with medium scores will be treated as mixed cases and interpreted qualitatively rather than forced into a fixed category.

Table 7. Matrix classification with indicators (source: author)

Ownership score (OS)	Dependency score (DS)	Category according to ownership – dependency matrix
1-6 OS + 13-18 DS	Low ownership + high dependency	Locally led by externally dependent
13-18 OS + 13-18 DS	High ownership + high dependency	Donor controlled and dependent
1-6 OS + 1- 6 DS	Low ownership + low dependency	Donor-directed but non-essential
13-18 OS + 1-6 DS	High ownership + low dependency	Locally led and relatively autonomous
7-12 OS + 7-12 DS	Medium/ mixed	No clear indication

As mentioned above, the 10 projects included in the analysis were selected according to the established selection criteria. The criteria were applied to identify projects that were relevant to the research questions and sufficiently comparable for the purposes of the research. The final sample therefore consists of 10 projects that met the defined eligibility requirements.

Table 8. Selected projects profiles (source: author)

	Project	Implementat ion period	EU-funding/ co-funding	Main contribution to civil society	Country
1	Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP I / CUSP II)	CUSP I: 48 months (2018 -2022) CUSP II (under GCSP III programme) : 2023 - 2027	CUSP I total 26,9 million euros: (25 million – EU) CUSP II (with the GCSP III programme) total 44,7 million (30 million - EU)	CSO capacity-building; networks/coalitions; technical assistance; state–CSO cooperation; grant support	Uganda
2	Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL)	2021-2025	5.8 million EU funding	Local CSO grants; capacity development; governance participation; networking; community engagement	Angola
3	Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (EU-ACT)	2019-2024	EU-funded, 13,8 million	CSO capacity-building; grants; networks/coalitions; organisational	Nigeria

				strengthening; multi-stakeholder dialogue	
4	Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT)	2021-2026; EU co-funding only for period of 2023-2025	EU co-funded (13, 65 million EUR; total implementation phase 27,48 million EUR).	CSO participation; advocacy capacity; legal-aid provision; policy dialogue; civic engagement	Zambia
5	Civil Society Fund III (CSF III)	2018/2019-2023	Co-funded by EU. Total budget 16,62 million EUR (EU contribution - 16 million)	CSO grants; capacity-building; policy engagement; monitoring public policy; technical assistance	Ethiopia
6	STAR-Ghana II / STAR Ghana Foundation	2015/2016-2020	GBP 21-22 million (~24 million EUR), funded by UK, Denmark and the EU	Local grants; CSO empowerment; technical assistance; coalition-building; institutional development	Ghana
7	Chilungamo - Justice and Accountability Programme / Tilitonse-linked civil society support	2018-2022	Total EUR 48 million (of which 2 million was managed by the Tilitonse Foundation on the grants for CSOs and funded by EU)	Local CSO grants; organisational support; citizen mobilisation; social accountability; community monitoring	Malawi
8	Renforcement et Participation de la Société Civile au Bénin (RePaSOC)	2016-2021	EUR 12 million (+ 2 million co-funding from GIZ)	CSO strengthening; local grants; institutional support; dialogue platforms; governance participation	Benin
9	Charter Project Africa (CPA)	2021-2024	EU co-founded and GIZ (<i>no clear identification of budget</i>)	CSO grants; digital tools; advocacy networks; regional cooperation; policy engagement	Pan-African (11 AU member states plus regional and continental level)
10	Strengthening Civil Society Organisations and Gender Inclusivity Project (PROSCIG)	2023-2028	Total 21 million (17 million EU co-funded, 4 million BMZ)	Local initiative funding; CSO capacity-building; network strengthening; organisational development; technical assistance	Cameroon

Detailed figure of the projects is placed in the *Annex I analysis of the 10 selected projects*.

2.6. Limitations of the research and sample

The research design is subject to several limitations arising primarily from its reliance on mostly publicly available documentary evidence. The most important limitation concerns the

uneven availability, accessibility and level of detail of project documentation. Although the cases were selected partly on the basis that sufficient documentation existed to enable comparative analysis, relevant information was often fragmented across EU Delegation websites, implementing-agency webpages, evaluation databases, archived documents, grant guidelines and third-party sources. In several cases, documents were difficult to locate, links were no longer functional, or information concerning budgets, implementation periods and project components differed across sources.

Several measures were taken to mitigate this problem. First, information was evaluated taken into account different types of sources wherever possible, including official EU documents, programme evaluations, implementing-agency reports, grant documentation and institutional webpages. Where different sources provided conflicting information, preference was given to more detailed official documentation, particularly official programme documents and impact evaluations. Second, the same coding rules were applied across all cases, and indicators were scored only where the available documentation provided sufficient evidence to support the assessment. Where no evidence could be identified, this was recorded as “N.e.”, rather than interpret data from the incomplete information. It is worth mentioning that the research also requested additional documentation (evaluations, action documents, project descriptions and other materials that were not publicly accessible) directly from programme/project stakeholders such as EU Delegations, implementing partners and other organisations. However, only a small number of stakeholders responded with documentation that could be incorporated into the analysis.

A related limitation concerns the nature of the available sources. A substantial proportion of the evidence consists of donor-generated or project-generated documents, including programme reports, media, and institutional webpages. Such sources may reflect the terminology and show what donor, or implementer wants to be visible. Such documentation as informal negotiations, disagreements between donors and local organisations, or forms of influence that were not formally documented may therefore be underrepresented. In order to mitigate this limitation, the analysis distinguishes between clearly documented facts and those that can only be assumed.

The study is also limited by the fact that it examines only 10 projects. The cases were selected to compare different countries, implementation procedures, and funding methods, rather than to provide a statistically representative sample of all EU-funded civil society initiatives in Africa.

Finally, the research did not examine the experts responsible for assessing applications submitted under competitive calls for proposals that could potentially influence the results of the awarded grants. The analysis can therefore identify competitive funding mechanisms, eligibility

requirements and documented selection procedures, but it cannot determine whether the professional or institutional backgrounds of evaluators influenced the interpretation of applications or final grant-award decisions. This aspect remains outside the scope of the present research and represents an area for further investigation.

3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This section compares the 10 selected EU-funded and EU co-funded civil-society projects in order to identify recurring patterns in how local ownership and project-level donor dependency are structured in practice. It first examines the overall distribution of ownership and dependency scores and then presents the key five patterns, including contextual adaptation and strategic authority, access to and control over resources, intermediary functions, donor-defined priorities, projectisation, competitive funding and accountability. The analysis is also used to identify the different forms and levels through which localisation occurs across the selected projects.

3.1. Overview of the cases and ownership - dependency distribution

The empirical analysis examines 10 EU-funded or EU co-funded civil-society projects implemented in different African national and regional contexts. The cases were selected to capture variation in the ways in which European development funding is channelled to and through civil-society organisations. The cases include programmes/projects implemented through EU delegations, European development agencies, international intermediaries and consortia, and grant facilities providing financial support to local CSOs, multi-donor programmes in which national civil-society organisations assume a more substantial role in grant management and overall implementation. This variation allows to compare differences in project design, funding arrangements, the position assigned to local civil-society organisations and other aspects.

The 10 selected cases are the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP I/II) in Uganda; PASCAL in Angola; Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation (EU-ACT) in Nigeria; EnACT in Zambia; Civil Society Fund III (CSF III) in Ethiopia; STAR-Ghana II in Ghana; the Tilitonse-linked civil-society component of the Chilungamo programme in Malawi; RePaSOC in Benin; Charter Project Africa (CPA), operating at regional and Pan-African levels; and PROSCIG in Cameroon. Although all 10 interventions seek in different ways to support civil society, the institutional arrangements through which this support is delivered vary considerably. Some programmes/projects are managed by European implementing agencies such as GIZ, FIAP, CPVA or the British Council, while others provide substantial grants to African CSOs or rely on locally

established organisations such as Tilitonse Foundation (*Annex I analysis of the 10 selected projects*).

The cases were assessed according to the ownership and dependency indicators developed in the methodological framework. Each dimension contains 6 indicators, with individual indicators scored between 1 and 3. A total score between 1 and 6 is interpreted as low, between 7 and 12 as medium, and between 13 and 18 as high. An indication of N.e. indicates that no relevant evidence was identified in the available documentation and should therefore not be interpreted as proof that the respective characteristic was entirely absent in practice (*Tables 4, 5, 6*). The scoring system is used as a comparative instrument for identifying similarities, differences and broader patterns across the cases.

Table 9. Ownership and dependency scores of the 10 selected projects (source: author)

	Project	Country/region	Ownership score	Ownership level	Dependency score	Dependency level
1	CUSP I/II	Uganda	12	Medium	14	High
2	PASCAL	Angola	11	Medium	16	High
3	EU-ACT	Nigeria	12	Medium	7	Medium
4	EnACT	Zambia	4	Low	8	Medium
5	CSF III	Ethiopia	9	Medium	15	High
6	STAR-Ghana II	Ghana	17	High	13	High
7	Chilungamo /Tilitonse	Malawi	17	High	10	Medium
8	RePaSOC	Benin	12	Medium	12	Medium
9	CPA	Pan-African	12	Medium	15	High
10	PROSCIG	Cameroon	10	Medium	10	Medium

The distribution presented in *Table 9* already reveals considerable variation. However, as it is already noticeable from the table, it does not suggest a straightforward division between projects characterised by either ownership or dependency, but instead, most cases evidently occupy intermediate positions on at least one dimension (7 of the 10 projects fall within the medium ownership category). It is important to highlight that only STAR-Ghana II and the Tilitonse reach the high-ownership range, while EnACT is the only project classified as low-ownership case. Dependency is distributed differently: 5 projects fall within the high-dependency category and 5

within the medium-dependency category. Significantly, none of the 10 projects records a low dependency score.

Figure 1. Distribution of the selected projects according to local ownership and donor dependency scores

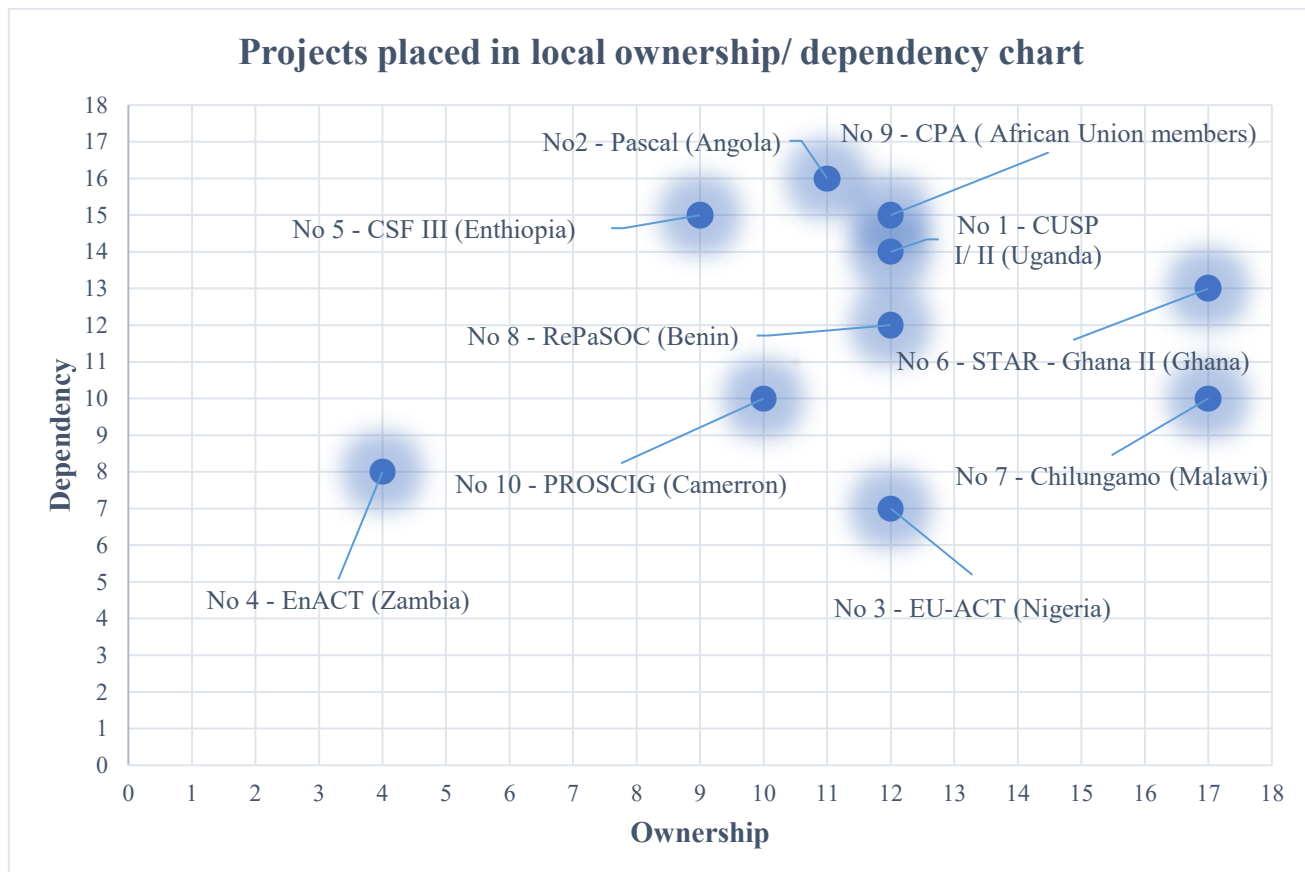


Figure 1 shows the individual ownership and dependency scores of all 10 projects on a scale from 0 (minimum score) to 18 (maximum score). Ownership is represented on the horizontal axis and donor dependency on the vertical axis.

The most visible feature of the distribution is the concentration of cases in the medium-ownership interval. CUSP I/II, PASCAL, EU-ACT, CSF III, RePaSOC, CPA and PROSCIG projects all receive ownership scores between 9 and 12. This indicates that the majority of projects contain identifiable mechanisms relatively supporting local CSO participation, control/access to resources or adaptation to local conditions, but that these mechanisms are generally insufficient to ensure strong and consistent local ownership.

If we look at the dimension of dependence, the cases are much more scattered. PASCAL receives the highest dependency score of 16 followed by CSF III and CPA (score 15), CUSP I/II (score 14) and STAR-Ghana II (score 13). These 5 projects therefore fall within the high-dependency category. The cases with the less dependency are EnACT (score 8) and EU-ACT

receives the lowest dependency score (score 7). However, it is noticeable that even EU-ACT with lowest dependency score out of 10 case projects, still remains within the medium-dependency range according to the scoring criteria. Therefore, there is not a single case in the empirical sample in which a medium or high level of ownership is combined with low dependence on donors, which is important finding. It suggests that improvements in local community participation, access to grants, institutional capacity, or even significantly better local-level governance of the projects do not necessarily eliminate dependence. At the same time, these cases do not support the assumption that a high degree of dependence automatically results in a low degree of ownership; on the contrary, this distribution shows that different levels of ownership can be found in projects that are dependent on external sources.

As example of it, the STAR-Ghana II programme provides the clearest illustration - with an ownership score of 17 and a dependency score of 13, it is the only case that falls within the high-ownership and high-dependency categories. The programme provided substantial support to Ghanaian civil society and eventually contributed to the establishment of the Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led STAR Ghana Foundation. At the same time, external donors remained central to programme finance and management, while competitive grant procedures, donor regulations, reporting requirements and audits continued to structure the programme itself. The case therefore shows why ownership, and dependency cannot be treated as simple opposites.

Another example is the Tilitonse - it also received a very high ownership score of 17, but its dependency score of 10 places it within the medium rather than high category. This comparatively stronger ownership position is associated with the fact that the EU-supported civil-society grant facility was managed by the Tilitonse Foundation, a Malawian local organisation responsible for selecting grant recipients, managing sub-grants and overseeing implementation. Nevertheless, the dependency is also evident - the programme continued to operate within an externally funded framework and remained subject to donor-defined programme priorities and formal financial and reporting requirements, including sub-grants. This example suggests that transferring the responsibility for managing subsidies to a national organization can significantly strengthen accountability but does not entirely eliminate dependence.

At the opposite end of the ownership scale is EnACT in Zambia, which receives an ownership score of 4 and a dependency score of 8. The available project documents show strong adaptation to Zambia's justice, governance and civic-space context but provide much less evidence that local CSOs exercise control over the programme's strategic priorities, main resources or governance arrangements. The project is co-financed by the EU and implemented through German institutional unit - GIZ, while local CSOs participate primarily in activities relating to policy reform, legal aid,

accountability and citizen participation. The EnACT case is therefore important because it illustrates that a project may be highly relevant to the local context (in this indicator project received score of 3) without necessarily demonstrating strong local ownership of the project itself.

Table 10. Projects distribution by ownership and dependency level (source: author)

Ownership/Dependency scores	Projects	Number of projects
Medium ownership + high dependency	CUSP I/II, PASCAL, CSF III, CPA	4
Medium ownership + medium dependency	EU-ACT, RePaSOC, PROSCIG	3
High ownership + high dependency	STAR- Ghana II	1
High ownership + medium dependency	Tilitonse	1
Low ownership + medium dependency	EnACT	1
Low dependency	-	0

A particularly interesting group consists of CUSP I/II, PASCAL, CSF III and CPA. All 4 projects/programmes have medium ownership but high dependency. These examples show that meaningful ownership by local civil society organizations can coexist with strong, donor-defined programme structures (dependency).

CUSP I/II, for example, recognises Uganda-specific civil-society challenges and includes CSO actors in some development of government policies, while the main programme remains aligned with EU and Germany priorities and managed through GIZ. The PASCAL gives Angolan CSOs access to grants and supports locally relevant work on decentralisation and participatory governance, but the overall programme is managed through European organisations/ public institutions, and its grant mechanism remains strongly structured by EU and donor-defined objectives and compliance rules. The CSF III displays a similar combination: Ethiopian CSOs directly implemented numerous grant contracts, and the programme was aligned with Ethiopia's developmental and governance reform policies, yet the overall dependency score remains high because the programme operated through donor-defined objectives, competitive calls for proposals and relatively short grant projects period for implementation. The CPA likewise provided African organisations with significant grant-management, technical and implementation responsibilities, while the overall programme remained embedded in an EU-defined policy framework and depended heavily on competitive grant mechanisms and donor compliance arrangements.

EU-ACT, RePaSOC and PROSCIG occupy the central part of the distribution, with both ownership and dependency remaining within the medium range. These cases are particularly useful

because they demonstrate that the ownership and dependency matrix (*Table 1*) should not be evaluated solely based on whether a project has low/ high dependency and/or ownership. The results of these projects indicate that project mechanisms supporting local ownership coexist with mechanisms supporting external influence and dependency; however, neither of these aspects is dominant enough for the project to be classified as one of the theoretical extreme cases.

Figure 2. Ownership-dependency matrix of the selected projects (source: AI generated figure)

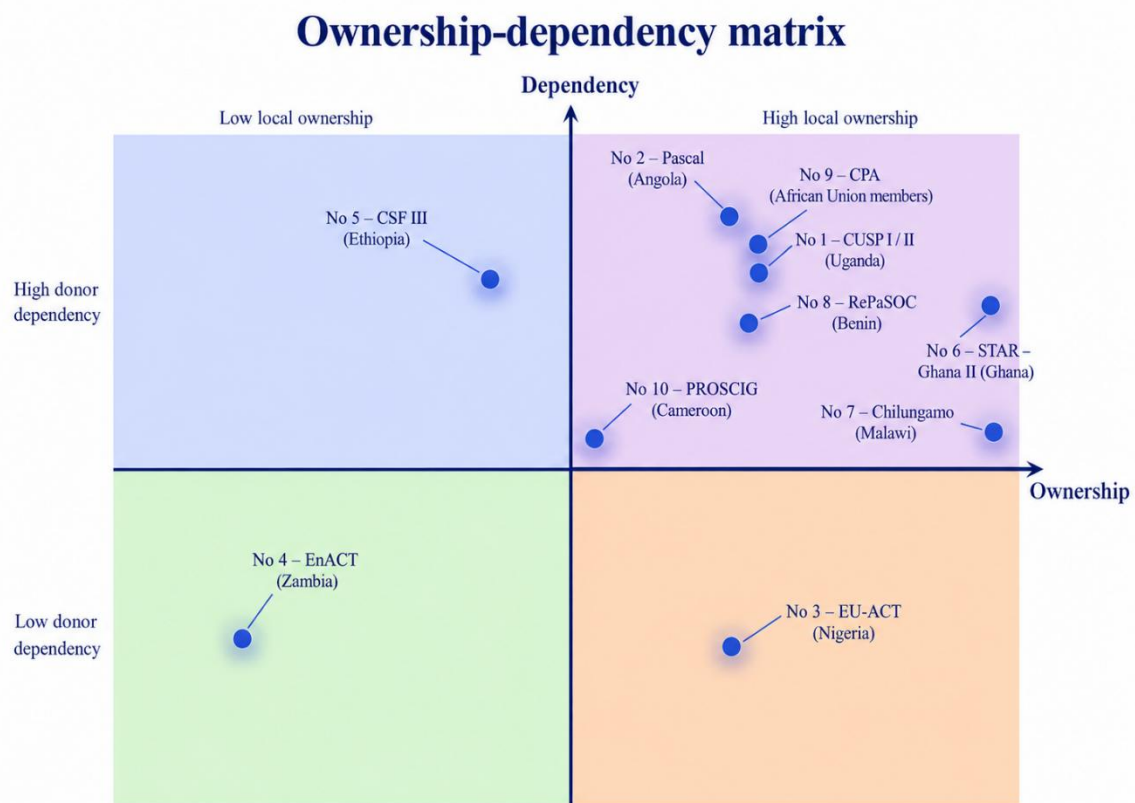


Figure 2 presents the same cases within the conceptual ownership-dependency matrix developed in the theoretical framework (*Table 1*). It should be considered as a complimentary figure to support the main figure (*Figure 1*) and should be understood primarily as an illustrative representation of the theoretical relationship between the 2 dimensions.

The Figure is only complementary because, as explained earlier, projects cannot be categorized as cases where dependence or responsibility is low or high. Most cases can be classified as having moderate interdependence and accountability, and this specific aspect is not illustrated in Figure 2.

So, few preliminary findings are evident from the overall distribution so far:

1. Strong local ownership is possible within externally funded projects, as demonstrated most clearly by STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse.

2. Strong ownership does not automatically eliminate donor dependency, because according to the results even the highest-scoring ownership cases remain within medium or high dependency categories.
3. The fact that there is not a single case in which the degree of dependence is low leads to the conclusion that external dependence is a common feature of the selected EU-funded civil society projects in Africa, although its form and intensity vary.

Thus, the summarized results partially confirm the analytical decision to treat local ownership and dependence on donors as separate but interrelated concepts. In the following sections, these assessments are broken down and analysed according to indicators and observed common characteristics (called patterns).

3.2. Pattern 1: Localisation of activities and contextual adaptation versus local strategic authority

One of the clearest patterns emerging from the 10 cases is a gap between adaptation to local context and control over the projects themselves. Across the sample, EU-funded civil-society projects generally demonstrate a strong capacity to identify and respond to country-specific political, institutional and civil-society contexts. However, evidence that local CSOs themselves determine overall project priorities or hold strategic decision-making authority is much more limited.

Table 11. Comparison of the indicators: local priority-setting, decision-making power and adaptation to local context (source: author) ⁸³

Project	Local priority-setting	Decision-making power	Adaptation to local context
CUSP I/II	2	1	3
PASCAL	1	2	3
EU-ACT	2	1	3
EnACT	N.e.	1	3
CSF III	1	1	1
STAR-Ghana II	3	2	3

⁸³ Note by the author: *At first glance, the “local priority setting” indicator may appear similar to “adaptation to the local context.” However, the 2 indicators capture different aspects of project design: “Local priority setting” assesses the extent to which local CSOs contribute to defining the project’s focus and priorities during the design stage. In contrast, “adaptation to the local context” assesses the extent to which the project design reflects identified local needs, constraints, and gaps.*

Chilungamo/Tilitonse	2	3	3
RePaSOC	2	2	3
Charter Project Africa	2	3	1
PROSCIG	2	2	3

As shown in Table 11, adaptation to local context receives higher scores across the sample than either local priority-setting or decision-making power. As seen the difference is significant. 8 of the 10 projects receive the maximum score of 3 for adaptation to local context, while only 1 project receives the maximum score for local priority-setting and only 2 receive the maximum score for decision-making power. Thus, it is clear that project outcomes, as measured by ownership indicators, are uneven across the EU funded programmes/projects in African region. However, the data also reveal that EU-funded programmes relatively successfully adapt to local circumstances when initiatives are financed by external funds and are implemented by external donors.

To support this statement, the CUSP I/II programme in Uganda could be used - its programme documentation contains a detailed analysis of the Ugandan civil-society environment, including shrinking civic space, organisational weaknesses, dependence on development-partner funding and the particular challenges faced by women's organisations. For this reason, the programme received the maximum score (3) for contextual adaptation. Yet the evidence regarding local control is more limited - CSO umbrella organisations participate in the Steering Committee of the project and local CSO partners participate in technical committees, but the available documents mainly demonstrate consultation and coordination during implementation rather than local co-design of the programme before its approval. At the same time, the main programme funding remains under GIZ management. So, CUSP I/II example demonstrates that deep knowledge of local conditions and formal spaces for CSO participation do not necessarily imply full local ownership.

The EnACT in Zambia provides perhaps the clearest example of the difference between contextual relevance and project ownership. The project receives a score of 3 for adaptation because it directly addresses Zambia-specific problems concerning access to justice, governance, vulnerable groups and operates in selected local provinces. Nevertheless, no clear evidence was identified in the available documentation showing local CSO participation in the original priority-setting process, resulting in indication of "N.e." for that indicator. For the contrast, it is seen that although EnACT seeks to strengthen civil-society participation in law-making and public decision-making, public documents, but do not demonstrate that local CSOs possess substantial authority over EnACT's own budget or strategic management. This case is also analytically valuable because it shows that its low ownership score cannot simply be explained by poor contextualisation, but the

opposite, the intervention appears highly responsive to important local governance and justice problems and it suggests that EU-funded projects/programmes donors are capable of reflect the local context and needs without significant internal local support.

Taken together, 10 project cases and figures (*Annex I analysis of the 10 selected projects*) the Table 11 show that consultation and implementation of local CSOs occur more frequently than full strategic co-ownership. Local CSOs may sit on committees, participate in dialogues, implement grants and adapt activities without necessarily being involved in determining the programme's initial thematic priorities and play a significant role in shaping the project itself. If looking at the theoretical aspects, this finding is particularly relevant to the theoretical distinction explained by Whitfield between ownership as commitment and ownership as control. If local organisations are involved only after a programme's basic priorities, design, activities and financial figures have been established, their participation may still be meaningful, but it already represents a more limited form of ownership than co-defining the original intervention before its implementation.

However, it should be also noted that the comparison also demonstrates that alignment with national priorities cannot automatically be treated as evidence of local CSO ownership. Several programmes refer to national development strategies, legislation or government priorities. CUSP I/II, for example, is linked to Uganda's National Development Plan III, while EU-ACT refers to Nigerian policy and legal frameworks such as such as National Gender Policy, Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 and others. Such alignment demonstrates contextual or national relevance, but the priorities of a government are not necessarily identical to the priorities of local civil society. So, the assessment of the indicators should be valued critically.

The STAR-Ghana II is the only project receiving the maximum score of 3 for local priority-setting. The programme connected local initiatives to national policy debates, while the transition toward the STAR Ghana Foundation involved consultations with actors across Ghana, including grant partners, civil-society leaders, even media and other stakeholders. It also receives the maximum contextual-adaptation score, because conducted political economy analysis supported in informing the programme and identifying the political context. Moreover, the eventual Foundation being conceived as a Ghanaian institution for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy. Nevertheless, even STAR-Ghana II receives only 2 for decision-making power. It is because although local participation became embedded in the programme's governance, particularly through the establishment of the local Foundation and its own governance structure, yet during the STAR-Ghana II period, the programme remained externally financed and was still managed by a Christian Aid-led consortium. However, the score is not maximum, because it was expected that after the funding ends, the Foundation will be able to work independently and locally. So, it could be

claimed that movement toward local ownership can be gradual rather than absolute. When it comes to the sustainability, it is expected that strategic authority may shift over time as governance become localised.

Overall, the available data support the distinguish between local adaptation and strategic local ownership. It is important to note that, out of the 10 cases examined, the vast majority of projects place a strong emphasis on addressing local contexts - national political conditions, restrictions on civic space, local governance issues, vulnerable groups, organizational capacity needs and others, however, strategic local ownership is limited.

The main pattern emerging from this subsection can therefore be summarised as follows: EU-funded civil society projects included in this sample of 10 projects tend to be more localized and take the local context into account, however, this does not mean that, when assessing the local context, local civil society is involved and its position is taken into account in the project design - and decision-making power may vary.

3.3. Pattern 2: Access to resources versus strategic control

A second important pattern emerging from the 10 selected cases concerns the difference between local CSOs access to financial resources (grants for instance) and local control over the broader funding structure (programme/project overall budget). Access to funding is probably one of the stronger dimensions of local ownership across the 10 projects. In several cases, African CSOs directly receive grants, manage project budgets and determine how resources are used within their individual actions. However, this does not necessarily mean that they control the overall programme budget, decide how funding is allocated across the programme/project, establish eligibility requirements or determine the contractual conditions. The cases therefore reveal a distinction between access to resources at the project/ grant level and control over resources at the programme/ project level.

This distinction is important because the transfer of money to a local organisation from the first glance can easily be interpreted as evidence of localisation or ownership. However, it is not necessarily the true - from the assessment it could be seen that local CSOs may have considerable operational control over the grants they receive while remaining part of the funding system whose main financial authority is held by the EU, an EU Member State agency or another international organisation.

The contrast can be seen by comparing the ownership indicator on control or access to resources with the dependency indicator concerning whether the main funding is controlled by international or EU Member State organisations rather than local CSOs.

Table 12. Comparison of indicators: control of access to resources, funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs (source: author)

Project	Control or access to resources	Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs
CUSP I/II	2	3
PASCAL	2	3
EU-ACT	3	2
EnACT	N.e.	3
CSF III	3	1
STAR-Ghana II	3	2
Chilungamo/Tilitonse	3	1
RePaSOC	2	2
CPA	3	2
PROSCIG	1	3

The table shows that local access to resources is relatively evident in the selected projects. 5 projects (EU-ACT, CSF III, STAR-Ghana II, Chilungamo/Tilitonse and CPA) receive the maximum score of 3 for local CSOs access or control over project resources. 3 further projects (CUSP I/II, PASCAL, and RePaSOC) provide at least partial access (score 2). Only EnACT receives a “N.e.” because the available documentation does not provide clear evidence that local CSOs directly receive or manage project funding.

The second indicator of dependency section (“Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs”) shows that the overall financial authority is much less given to the local organizations of Africa. The projects CUSP I/II, PASCAL, EnACT and PROSCIG all receive the maximum dependency score of 3 for the concentration of main funding control in international or EU Member State organisations. In several other projects, responsibility is shared between local and international actors (in EU-ACT, STAR-Ghana II, RePaSOC, and CPA). Only CSF III and the Tilitonse receive the lowest dependency score of 1 on this indicator, although for different reasons that will be discussed below.

The most common structure used in majority of the projects is mixed approach by combining the local grants, technical external assistance and governance authority of the donor. According to the sample and results, in the project, local organisations manage resources within individual grants, technical assistance is provided by the EU member state or international organization for instance,

while the same external actor retains authority over the larger programme/ project envelope. This distinction is particularly visible in PASCAL. Angolan NGOs were able to directly apply for and manage grants. The calls provided approximately €1 million for local CSO actions, with individual grants between maximum of €185,000 and €225,000. From the Guidelines for applicants (GfA), it is seen that the lead applicant was required to be an NGO registered in Angola and directly responsible for managing its action.⁸⁴ This represents a meaningful transfer of resources to local organisations. However, it cannot be said that grants were responsible for the strategic programme's/project's financial decisions, because this financial ownership operated within a larger programmes/projects structure that remained under EU members states management. PASCAL was implemented through an EU Member State consortium, and also other parts of the programme such as technical-assistance remained externally managed. The case therefore illustrates the difference between being able to manage a grant and being able to influence the funding system that finances the grant. Angolan CSOs could control resources once selected, but they did not determine the overall programme envelope or its priorities because they were already defined in the call for proposals GfA.

A similar distinction is visible in CUSP I/II. Ugandan CSOs have access to capacity-building, operational support and selected financial grants, and some support is directed towards the strategic and institutional development of CSO platforms. Nevertheless, the main programme funding remains channelled through GIZ rather than directly controlled by Ugandan organisations. For CUSP I, the €25 million EU-funded action was implemented under indirect management through GIZ, which retained responsibility for overall management, budget implementation, procurement and grant procedures. CUSP I/II therefore illustrates that the existence of grants to local CSOs does not necessarily change the main financial authority of the programme/project (though it receives some points for the ownership but maximum score). PROSCIG project as well could be taken as example - the project provides financial support to Cameroonian CSOs and plans to finance locally implemented initiatives. However, the available evidence indicates that German institutional unit GIZ have control of the principal programme envelope. At the programme level, the €21 million intervention is implemented principally through German institutional unit GIZ and international organization UNFPA.

It is evident that in these programmes/projects managing authority can provide resources to local actors while the authority of controlling allocation, contracting and overall programme expenditure remain under external institutional control.

⁸⁴ Central Project Management Agency, "Call for Proposals under 'Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL)',", <https://cpva.lt/en/calls-for-proposals/call-for-proposals-under-support-to-civil-society-in-local-governance-in-angola-pascal>.

CSF III in Ethiopia represents a somewhat different arrangement. It receives a score of 3 for access to resources because the programme funded directly 27 projects implemented by local Ethiopian CSOs. It is important to note that no intermediary was present here- The European Commission through EU delegation to Ethiopia directly supported the Ethiopian SCOs, therefore the dependency indicator on funding is scored only 1. This case is particularly important because it shows that direct local funding is not sufficient on its own to remove donor dependency. Direct grants can increase the ability of local organisations to act and can shift implementation resources away from external intermediary, however, if the size, duration, thematic scope and conditions of those grants remain externally structured, local organisations may still depend on the donor funding system.

RePaSOC in Benin provides an example of more explicitly shared financial control receiving 2 points for both indicators. The programme financed 49 projects implemented by Beninese CSOs, allocating more than CFAF 2.2 billion (approximate 3,3 mln euros⁸⁵) to local grants. The Maison de la Société Civile, which is local organization, also received a direct grant and implemented a major programme component. Local organisations therefore had substantial access to and management of financial resources, however, they did not control the programme's full envelope. RePaSOC therefore demonstrates a middle position in which localisation of funding is substantial but incomplete. This is consistent with its overall medium-ownership and medium-dependency position in the comparative analysis.

STAR-Ghana II represents one of the stronger cases of financial localisation. Grant funding was a central programme mechanism with a significant number of grants distributed to the local CSOs. At the same time, STAR-Ghana's financial structure evolved institutionally: during the programme period, overall management remained with a Christian Aid-led mainly international consortium, but the transition to the STAR Ghana Foundation created a Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led organisation which fully assumed ownership of its own strategic direction and long-term financial sustainability after the project funding ended.⁸⁶ This makes STAR-Ghana programme analytically different from programmes/projects where localisation is limited to the allocation of individual grants. The programme sought to build a local independent organizational structure capable of continuing to mobilise and manage resources themselves, rather than only transfer resources to local organisations for restricted in time activities. Nevertheless, the dependency score remains high overall because external donors continued to finance the programme throughout its

⁸⁵ According to the calculations of the current year's annual average CFAF/EUR rates.

⁸⁶Currently the organization is still operating - <https://star-ghana.org/>

period and grant recipients remained subject to donor funding procedures. The case therefore again suggests that strong financial ownership and donor dependency can coexist.

The strongest example of locally controlled funding in the sample is the Tilitonse. Unlike cases where an international organization implementing a project takes responsibility for the main grant programme, in this case the EU awarded the grant directly to the Malawian national organization, the Tilitonse Foundation. Tilitonse then administered the programme itself, selected sub-grant recipients, managed the sub-grants, and oversaw overall implementation. The documentation confirms that Tilitonse managed the €2 million facility and funded local and some international CSOs and other non-state actors. From the available documentation it could be seen that a local organization did not merely receive a grant for implementing a donor-defined action, but it carried out its responsibilities related to the allocation of resources to other civil society organizations. Thus, it can be said that the community of local organizations determined the activities and priorities for further funding.

Across the 10 cases, the empirical evidence suggests at least 3 different levels of financial ownership:

1. Local CSOs participate in activities but there is little or no documented evidence that they directly control financial resources.
2. Local organisations receive and manage grants, but the main programme envelope and financial rules remain controlled by an international implementing intermediary.
3. Local actors exercise not only grant-level management but also more significant responsibility for allocating or administering funds.

At the same time, these cases should not be interpreted as evidence that external financial management automatically eliminates the local ownership. Examples from the projects analysed show that local civil society organizations can exercise significant control over their individual grants even when programme/project-level management remains external. Thus, financial control can be both local at the implementation level and external at the programme management level.

In summary, EU-funded development cooperation civil society projects appear to be more successful in expanding local communities' access to resources, but they face bigger challenges in transferring control due to the structure of joint financial management within the projects. Local organizations often become grant recipients and project implementers, but authority over the overall management of the project often remains with donors or international implementing organizations.

3.4. Pattern 3: Local project governance versus intermediary functions.

A third pattern concerns the role of intermediary organisations between the EU and local civil-society organisations. Intermediary organizations/institutions/units include European development agencies such as GIZ, European public-sector organisations such as FIAP and CPVA, international organisations such as the British Council and Christian Aid, European and African-led consortium partners, technical-assistance structures, and locally established organisations such as the Tilitonse Foundation.

Intermediaries play an important role in many of the selected projects. It could be said that in the project scope, the intermediaries perform a dual role: they provide technical expertise, capacity development, coordination, grant administration and access to financial resources, while at the same time potentially retaining authority over programme management, funding allocation, reporting and strategic decisions. This makes intermediary involvement particularly relevant to the relationship between ownership and dependency. On the one hand, intermediaries can ensure that EU resources are made available to local civil society organizations and they can also provide not only financial but also other types of assistance (such as organizational support, mentoring, technical expertise, knowledge exchanges, and platforms for collaboration). However, intermediaries can also have a negative impact- when an intermediary remains the primary contracting partner and controls the programme's budget, the strengthening of local civil society organizations may occur without an appropriate transfer of management and leadership at the programme/project level.

Table 13. Comparison projects intermediaries and their role in the programme/project (source: author)

	Project	Main intermediary (if any)	Role in the project	Potential constraint on local ownership
1	CUSP I/II	GIZ	Capacity development, mentoring, support to CSO networks, funding the grants	GIZ controls overall programme management and main funding envelope
2	PASCAL	FIAP and CPVA consortium	Technical assistance, funding the grants, strengthening networks	European consortium controls overall programme management and main funding envelope
3	EU-ACT	British Council	Capacity-building, support to CSO networks, coalitions, funding the grants	British Council is accountable and implementing organisation
4	EnACT	GIZ	Technical assistance, support to monitoring of	GIZ controls overall programme management

			public institutions, awareness raising	and main funding envelope
5	CSF III	EUD and TAU (which consist of different companies and organizations form EU Member states such as Spain, Belgium, etc.)	Technical assistance, capacity building, funding the grants	Strategic programme management remains external with EU and Members states expertise
6	STAR - Ghana II	Christian Aid, SDDirect, ODI, and Nkum Associates consortium	Technical assistance, funding the grants, establishment of foundation	External consortium initially managed the programme
7	Chilungamo/ Tiltonse	Tiltonse Foundation	Technical assistance, capacity development, funding the grants	Still operates within donor-defined (EU) objectives and reporting requirements
8	RePaSOC	GIZ, MdSC, Beninese government, CPSC	Technical assistance, capacity building, funding the grants	Authority shared, but local CSOs did not control entire programme
9	CPA	EPD, 2 European (EPD, ECDPM) and 4 African organisations DWF, CfA, AfricTivistes, Gorée Institute) consortium	Technical assistance, capacity building, support to CSO networks, platforms, funding the grants	Authority shared, but local civil society organizations did not have control over the entire programme; moreover, the programme management is led by an international organization
10	PROSCIG	GIZ and UNFPA	Technical assistance, capacity building, support to CSO networks, platforms, funding the grants	GIZ and international organization controls overall programme management and main funding envelope

The CUSP I/II programme illustrates the dual role particularly clearly. GIZ functions as the main implementing organisation, but its role is not limited to administering EU finance. CUSP I/II provides capacity development, mentoring, support to CSO platforms and networks and some financial support to local organisations through grants. Local CSO umbrella organisations also participate in the Steering Committee and relevant technical committees, meaning that the intermediary structure creates at least some channels for local involvement in implementation and programme governance, but at the same time, GIZ retains the programme-level functions. The intermediary, therefore, strengthens local organisational capacities and at the same time remains the unit through which the principal programme authority is exercised. CUSP I/II case demonstrates

why capacity-building should not itself be treated as evidence that control has been transferred, because an intermediary can strengthen CSOs' skills, networks and operational capacity while retaining authority over the financial and contractual structure within which those capacities are implemented. Moreover, it should be noted that capacity building agenda could be shaped by the international norms (reference to Manner's Normative Power Europe) and knowledge, which endangers the local development. However, the documentary evidence analysed here does not allow the study to determine how local organisations themselves perceived or negotiated this influence.

A similar pattern is visible in PASCAL programme. The programme is implemented through delegated cooperation by the European consortium of FIAP and CPVA, in cooperation with Angolan institutions. At the same time, the project provides grants to Angolan CSOs, supports capacity development and networking, and has contributed to strengthening civil-society networks and dialogue forums. The intermediary in this case provides both technical and financial support with which Angolan organisations can implement locally relevant actions and align with the local issues. However, the programme-level authority is still of the FIAP/CPVA consortium which is responsible for the overall implementation, while the main thematic and grant priorities are structured through the programme and calls for proposals (GfA) of the same consortium.⁸⁷ Local CSOs directly manage their individual actions, but the available documentation does not demonstrate equivalent local control over the overall PASCAL programme. So, this case shows that intermediary can function as a supporter of local implementation and at the same time as a holder of programme-level authority.

The EnACT programme is implemented by GIZ, commissioned by BMZ and co-financed by the EU provides in a way stronger evidence of intermediary authority in the programme. Zambian CSOs participate as advocacy organisations, accountability actors and legal-aid providers through policy dialogue, monitoring and local legal-support activities. However, the available documentation provides limited evidence that local CSOs directly control the project budget or strategic management, while GIZ remains the central implementing actor. This case is interesting because EnACT and above-mentioned CUSP I/II managed by the German institutional unit GIZ, but it is evident that their ownership patterns are not identical. CUSP I/II provides clearer evidence of CSOs involvement, selected grants and formal participation in governance structures, whereas EnACT's available documentation provides considerably weaker evidence of direct CSO financial and strategic authority. It can, therefore, be assumed that the presence of the same intermediary in different programmes/projects does not imply that the engagement in all will be the same. Of course, it is important to note that EnACT provided significantly less information, as it was

⁸⁷To be precise, CPVA was responsible for the grant component.

indicated for many of the evaluation scores that the documents were not available, so the conclusion should be taken with caution.

STAR-Ghana II documentation provides an example of how intermediary functions can shift over time. During the programme period, STAR-Ghana II was managed by a Christian Aid-led international consortium and financed by external donors. Ghanaian organisations nevertheless received financial grant support and participated in programme activities. The significant feature of STAR-Ghana II programme, however, was the transition from this externally managed programme structure toward the STAR Ghana Foundation, designed as a Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led institution. It means that the programme did not merely fund individual Ghanaian CSOs, but it aimed to establish a longer-term national institution able to bring together civil society and provide a platform for active citizenship and philanthropy. It is interesting and effective way to solve the localization - rather than removing the intermediary function itself, STAR-Ghana attempted to “localise the intermediary”: functions such as civil-society coordination, grant support and institutional leadership increasingly moved toward a nationally owned structure. However, as mentioned before, throughout the implementation the programme continued to rely on external donor funding, and grant recipients remained subject to formal grant procedures, donor regulations, audits and reporting requirements.

The Tilitonse Foundation in Malawi provides probably clearest example of a locally rooted intermediary with substantial delegated authority within the programme. Within the civil-society component analysed in this thesis, the €2 million grant facility was directly managed by Tilitonse, a local Malawian organisation. Tilitonse was responsible for selecting grant recipients, managing sub-grants and overseeing their implementation. Unlike cases in which local organisations only become involved after an international intermediary has selected them, Tilitonse in this case occupied the intermediary position itself. Tilitonse was able to interpret the broader donor-defined objectives through its own strategic plan and thematic choices. However, it is worth mentioning that the fund giver (EU) function remained present, because it still needed to comply with EU rules and priorities, but much more authority (comparing to other projects) over that function was located within the national civil-society organization. Tilitonse nevertheless remained accountable upward - the Foundation reported against the EU action logical framework and financial requirements, while a Joint Technical Team involving development partners reviewed progress and technical decisions. This illustrates the broader argument of the thesis: local intermediary organizations can increase ownership without eliminating the donors or other external intermediary.

RePaSOC in Benin and CPA represent 2 different forms of shared intermediation, in which programme authority is distributed between local or African actors and international organisations.

RePaSOC presents a relatively hybrid national arrangement - its implementation involved GIZ, Beninese government actors, the Maison de la Société Civile (local organizations), the Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society (national institution) and additional technical assistance, creating several institutional channels through which local actors could participate in programme implementation and civil-society development. Local organisations also directly received significant financial resources: 49 Beninese CSOs have been awarded the grants, while also the Maison de la Société Civile received direct support. Thus, this case shows that local organizations in a way acted not only as beneficiaries or subcontractors responsible for implementation but also were part of project management activities. However, responsibility was not fully transferred to the local level. The RePaSOC programme can therefore be understood as a case of shared intermediation in which authority was divided among local civil-society institutions, national public actors and international organisations. On the other hand, CPA demonstrates a comparable principle at the regional level but through a consortium model combining European and African organisations. African consortium partners held responsibilities for grant management, regional programming, training, technical support and implementation, while African CSOs directly received and managed project grants. At the same time, overall programme coordination remained with the Brussels-based European Partnership for Democracy organization, and another consortium member was also Europe-based, therefore, the financial and managerial authority was therefore shared rather than fully localised. The comparison between RePaSOC and CPA shows that intermediaries in the programme/project could have different levels of authority and decision-making.

CPA, however, also reveals a significant issue in shared intermediation - intermediary organisations can transfer part of resources and authority to local organizations/institutions while still keeping donor requirements. The final evaluation of the programme found that grantees faced complex financial-reporting requirements, approved-budget rules and EU compliance procedures, in some cases, rejected reports or delayed disbursements interrupted implementation and required organisations to use their own resources or terminate activities.⁸⁸ Thus, even in cases where African organizations play a significant role in grant management and intermediation, they are still required to comply with the rules and requirements established by the donor (in this case - EU).

The theoretical distinction between support “to” CSOs and support “through” CSOs is particularly relevant here (reference to the OECD’s distinction between support “to” and “through” CSOs). It is noticeable that several intermediaries can combine both functions. CUSP I/II, EU-ACT,

⁸⁸Florence Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa* (Policy Impact Lab and PIMA, January 31, 2025), 43, 49, 57.

STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse provide capacity or institutional support designed to strengthen civil society itself, while simultaneously using grants and local implementation to achieve programme/project-defined governance and objectives. STAR-Ghana clearly combines project implementation with sector strengthening, and the establishment of a Ghanaian-owned institution. Tilitonse similarly combines restricted in time donor-supported interventions with investment in capacity building and sustainability of CSOs. It can be seen that support “through” and support “to” CSOs can be treated not as mutually exclusive categories at the programme/project level, but that both can coexist within a single programme/project.

The intermediary cases also reveal a potential distinction between capacity transfer and authority transfer. Many international intermediaries clearly transfer knowledge, skills, technical support and financial resources to local organisations. However, the transfer of authority over the programme is less consistent. CUSP I/II provides capacity support while GIZ retains the principal management structure; PASCAL strengthens Angolan CSOs while the European consortium retains overall programme management; and EU-ACT develops Nigerian CSO capacity while the British Council remains the accountable organisation. By contrast, Tilitonse demonstrates a stronger combination of both - the Malawian Foundation not only received support but exercised grant-management and selection authority. Also, STAR-Ghana similarly moved toward stronger institutional authority through the creation of a Ghanaian-led organization. These cases show that the strongest form of localization occurs not only when intermediaries strengthen local capacities, but also when the functions of the intermediaries themselves, within the scope of projects, are transferred to local organizations.

Thus, the main conclusion of this subsection is that intermediaries can simultaneously help local organizations develop, build capacity, but they can also increase dependence on external actors. They can ensure access to resources, strengthen capacities, support networks, and help organizations become significant actors in political processes, but, however, in cases where they retain primary contractual, financial, and strategic authority, they can also increase dependence.

Therefore, it cannot be said that EU-funded cooperation with civil society should not involve intermediaries from other European countries or international organizations, but rather to focus more on the distribution of responsibilities and the involvement of local civil society, or after the project’s completion to ensure sustainability. It can be argued that, based on the cases analysed, greater ownership is achieved when local actors become not only recipients of support from intermediaries but also begin to gain intermediary functions themselves: managing grant programmes, selecting organizations, allocating resources, participating in strategic management, and establishing institutions managed at the local level. At the same time, the fact that even in these

cases the rules set by donors continue to apply indicates that localized or shared intermediation reduces some forms of dependency but does not necessarily eliminate others.

3.5. Pattern 4: Donor priorities and projectisation versus local empowerment

A fourth major pattern emerging from the comparative analysis concerns the relationship between donor-defined priorities, project-based funding and competitive grant rules. These mechanisms appear repeatedly across most of the 10 projects in Africa and are closely connected. In many cases, the donor or other intermediary who is responsible for grants first establishes the broad thematic priorities, these priorities are then translated into time-restricted projects with predefined outputs and deliverables, and local CSOs compete among themselves for funding to implement activities within that framework. This does not mean that local organisations have no influence over project content - as demonstrated in the previous sections, many CSOs adapt activities to local conditions and gaps, design individual initiatives and manage their own grants. Nevertheless, the range of activities and expected result for which funding is available is often established before local organisations enter the grant application and evaluation process.

Table 13. Comparison of projects indicators: donor-defined priorities, short-term projectisation, competitive funding culture (source: author)

Project	Donor-defined priorities	Short-term projectisation	Competitive funding culture
CUSP I/II	3	1	2
PASCAL	3	3	2
EU-ACT	2	2	N.e.
EnACT	2	2	N.e.
CSF III	3	3	3
STAR-Ghana II	2	1	3
Chilungamo/Tilitonse	1	2	2
RePaSOC	2	2	3
CPA	2	3	3
PROSCIG	2	2	N.e.

The 9 of the 10 projects receive a score of either 2 or 3 in the donor-defined priorities indicators, showing partial or strong evidence that programme priorities arise from EU, Member State or broader donor programming frameworks. Only Tilitonse receives a score of 1, reflecting

greater space for the Malawian Foundation to implement broad programme goals through its own strategy and grant portfolio. Projectisation is also evident: 8 of 10 cases receive scores of 2 or 3. Competitive funding is more hardly defined in the selected projects: clear evidence of competition exists in 7 cases, while EU-ACT, EnACT and PROSCIG receive “N.e.” because the available documents do not provide sufficient evidence to determine whether local funding was allocated through competitive calls. In accordance with the methodology, these “N.e.” indicate absence of available evidence rather than proof that competition did not occur.

Donor-defined priorities

Unfortunately, across most cases, local CSOs do not work with a completely open funding space in which they independently decide which social or political issues should receive support. Instead, EU or other donor programming frameworks generally establish broad thematic areas, objectives and expected results before local organisations become involved in the funding process, and civil society organizations then have limited and varying degrees of freedom of action within those predefined spaces.

PASCAL provides one of the clearest examples of this structure. Its calls for proposals (GfA) defined eligible priority areas before Angolan CSOs submitted their applications, including civil-society participation in local governance, awareness of rights, decentralisation and participatory governance, while applications were evaluated partly according to their relevance to these predetermined programme objectives. The organisations seeking funding had to formulate and align their proposed activities into the thematic framework established by the programme in order to become eligible for financial support. This does not mean that the resulting initiatives were locally irrelevant or that Angolan CSOs lacked ability to shape their individual actions. As discussed in Section 4.2, PASCAL was strongly adapted to Angola's governance and decentralisation context, and local organisations could identify specific problems within their communities and municipalities and design activities responding to them. However, the issue occurs in terms of the project level at which choice occurred: Angolan civil society organizations had the freedom to decide on the content, methods, and implementation of individual projects, but had significantly less influence on the preliminary decision regarding which broad governance issues and types of intervention would be considered eligible for donor funding in the first place. Questions also arise regarding how applications are evaluated when determining what is eligible or ineligible, and which evaluators (local or international) assess the applications and make the decisions. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis and will not be discussed further.

CUSP I/II in Uganda follows a similar pattern, although through a different programme structure. Its priorities were aligned with the EU CSO Roadmap and with focal sectors of EU and German development cooperation in Uganda, producing a dependency score of 3 for donor-defined priorities. At the same time, this external strategic context was combined with a detailed analysis of Uganda's civic environment, an adaptation to the specific conditions of civil society in that country, and the participation of Ugandan civil society organizations in the implementation process, however, this has already been discussed in Section 4.2 regarding local priority setting and adaptation to the local context.

Similarly, the CSF III in Ethiopia provides particularly well-documented example of the same pattern of donor agenda-setting. The programme was established as an EU Civil Society Fund intervention with predefined objectives concerning citizen and CSO participation in Ethiopian governance and development, and its calls for proposals were subsequently designed within this funding framework, requiring prospective Ethiopian grantees to align their proposed actions with priorities that had already been established at programme level. The evaluation further linked the absence of a functioning Steering Committee to weaknesses in strategic coordination, monitoring indicating that the mechanisms through which broader programme priorities might have been negotiated were themselves limited.⁸⁹

Taken together, PASCAL, CUSP I/II and CSF III demonstrate that donor-defined priorities do not necessarily prevent local adaptation, locally relevant implementation or meaningful CSO participation, but they structure and limit the scope within which organization could receive funding. In all 3 cases, local organisations could influence important aspects of implementation and respond to national or community-level conditions, but their ability and options in choice generally appears only after the broader thematic and financial framework had already been established.

These cases where grants are awarded according to the pre-defined priorities highlights an important distinction between donor-set goals and donor-set implementation solutions. External funding defines certain goals and contractual objectives, as donors also have their own agendas, but giving at least limited space for the local organizations to define the activities is commendable, but not enough. Local organizations should have more power in managing the funds and setting the priorities of the programmes/projects.

Projectization

⁸⁹ EuroPlus Consulting & Management and Particip GmbH, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III (CSF III): Ethiopia*, final report, prepared for the European Commission (January 2024), 10, 20.

Most of the cases do not provide unrestricted or permanent institutional financial support to local civil society. Instead, financial support is commonly organised through projects with defined start and end dates, budgets, outputs, indicators and reporting requirements. However, the operation, methods, and intensity of this mechanism vary greatly across programmes/projects.

PASCAL is among the strongest examples. Its first call financed CSO actions lasting approximately 12-14 months, while the second supported actions lasting around 10-12 months. The application process required standard project-cycle elements including concept notes, full proposals, logical frameworks, indicators, activity plans, monitoring frameworks, evaluation and sustainability sections. Although these procedures provide structure and make the use of public funding more accountable and transparent, they also organise civil-society support around relatively short grant cycles. The consequences of the short terms projectization become even clearer in CSF III, where it is possible to refer to the impact report. Its final evaluation report identified reliance on project-based funding as one of the significant programme's weaknesses. According to the project analysis, implementation increasingly shifted from broader strategic civil-society strengthening toward management of individual grants, activities and products. Implementation schedules encouraged rapid completion and expenditure, while the planned exit strategy was not fully implemented.⁹⁰ This observation is important because it shows that projectization is not only related to the duration of a grant and how long funding lasts, but it can also influence what implementing agencies focus on and what kind of assistance they do or do not provide. When programme/project management becomes dominated by grant administration, expenditures, and completion requirements, there is not enough time and abilities to focus on long-term goals such as organizational development, sector strengthening, and sustainability.

CPA also provides evidence of very short project cycles affecting programmes results. Although the overall programme ran from 2021 to 2024, most Democratic Governance Initiatives (DGIs) reportedly received funding for only around 6 months (!). The evaluation and CSOs which received the grants considered these periods insufficient for proper implementation, organisational development and sustained civic technology adoption. Some initiatives stopped their activities once funding ended, and the evaluators recommended substantially longer future funding periods.⁹¹ The final evaluation of EU-ACT revealed trends similar to those of the CPA - the projects were short-term and did not achieve financial independence, which affected their sustainability, whereas other grant recipients indicated that they had expanded their knowledge and capabilities in the area of

⁹⁰ EuroPlus Consulting & Management and Particip GmbH, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III*, 10, 48.

⁹¹ Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa* (Policy Impact Lab and PIMA, January 31, 2025), 43, 49, 57.

grant management and were able to apply for further funding, which indicates that attention was also paid to the administrative aspects of grant implementation.⁹²

Therefore, the CPA and EU-ACT programmes demonstrate that it is important to consider not only the duration of projects, but also how long political and institutional changes take. Processes such as governance reform, advocacy, coalition-building, and organizational development may require continuous involvement, whereas short-term grants encourage activities that can be completed and reported on within a relatively short period of time. The problem is not only that projects have deadlines, but also the need for a realistic assessment of how long a specific change takes and whether the initiative can continue without external funding afterward.

STAR-Ghana II uses project grants but combines them with the longer-term institutional objective of establishing a sustainable Ghanaian-owned Foundation which will be able to take care of itself financially after the funding ends. So, this case shows that the consequences of projectisation can be mitigated when project funding is combined with institutional development and sustainability measures after the programme/project. So, it could be suggested that time-restricted funding does not necessarily lead to strong dependency if the continuation of activities is ensured after the funding ends.

Competitive funding

The third feature is competitive funding. Competitive calls are central to several projects because they determine which organisations gain access to donor resources. Though in the indicators it was attributed to dependency sphere, calls for proposals can promote transparency and equality, but the reason that it is for the dependency, because local CSOs must position themselves and its proposals within donor-defined selection systems to access the funding.

PASCAL illustrates the formal structure of such competition. Its funding procedures included calls for proposals, administrative checks, concept-note assessment, full application evaluation, eligibility verification, scoring grids and ranking. Applications were funded according to their score.⁹³ Local CSOs therefore had access to important resources, but only after succeeding within a competitive system whose criteria and available budget were externally established. However, the CSF III suggests more evidence of potentially problematic consequences. Its evaluation concluded that the funding mechanism divided organisations into successful and unsuccessful groups and concentrated support among 27 selected organisations and their partners despite wider sector-level capacity needs. It also found that some Ethiopian CSOs perceived partnerships with international

⁹²EuroPlus Consulting, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III*, 36.

⁹³Central Project Management Agency, "Call for Proposals."

organisations as a way of improving their chances of receiving funding.⁹⁴ This finding is particularly important for the dependency argument because it suggests that competition may encourage organisations to strengthen proposals and demonstrate capacity, but it may also reward those already best equipped to navigate donor procedures. As a result, access to funding can depend on an organisation's ability to produce applications that meet donor expectations.

RePaSOC presents another strong example. Most of its 49 grants were distributed through calls for proposals, and the EU reportedly described the process as highly competitive, with only around 10 per cent of submitted proposals selected.⁹⁵ This means that while the programme successfully channelled substantial funding to Beninese CSOs, most applicant organisations did not receive support. In the CPA case it is also evident that traditional call for proposals provides the barriers to less professionalised actors. STAR-Ghana II also receives a strong score for competitive funding, because its grant manual included formal requests for applications, assessment procedures, and structured grant-management processes. This is analytically important because STAR-Ghana II achieves the highest ownership score in the sample. And it strengthens the previously mentioned idea that competitive grant culture present in the programme/project therefore does not automatically prevent strong local ownership.

Interaction of 3 above mentioned mechanisms

The empirical finding is not simply that donor priorities, projectisation and competition each appear separately. This is seen from the sample that in several cases, they operate in connection.

From such programmes as PASCAL, CSF III and CPA it could be seen that relatively meaningful local ownership can coexist with high dependency. Once selected, local CSOs may genuinely design activities, manage grants and exercise implementation authority. However, their autonomy operates within an externally financed system that has already determined what categories of action can be funded, for how long, and through which selection mechanisms.

This does not mean that donor-defined priorities should automatically be interpreted as illegitimate or that competitive funding should be eliminated. It is evident that donors have policy objectives, public funds require accountability, and selection mechanisms are needed where limited available resources are insufficient to finance every applicant. Therefore, it could be said that the issue is not simply the existence of rules or priorities, but rather the extent to which these mechanisms allow for local organizations to set their own priorities and activities. The CSOs may

⁹⁴EuroPlus Consulting, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III*, 18.

⁹⁵European External Action Service (EEAS), "Remise de chèques aux Organisations de la Société Civile bénéficiaires des subventions RePaSoC," 25 April 2019, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/61452_en.

gain operational ownership over individual projects without gaining autonomy over their longer-term organisational agendas.

In summary, it is evident that local ownership is often implemented within the limits set in advance by donors and external implementers. The EU and its implementing partners frequently set common priorities, while local civil society organizations shape the projects at various levels within this framework. Competitive funding encourages local organizations to compete and leads them to shape the projects more closely to donor requirements in order to secure funding. This could be addressed by extending project implementation periods and involving local civil society in programmes/project design, as also discussed in Section 4.2.

3.6. Pattern 5: Upward accountability versus community accountability

A fifth pattern emerging from the comparative analysis concerns the accountability within EU-funded civil-society projects. The selected 10 cases show a clear difference between accountability directed upward towards donors, contracting authorities and programme-management structures, and accountability directed towards the communities, members and constituencies that local CSOs represents or should represent. Across the sample it is noticeable that donor-facing accountability is considerably more consistently formalised and documented than community-facing accountability.

This distinction is important for the analysis of both ownership and dependency. Accountability to donors is an unavoidable element of publicly funded development cooperation programmes/projects: organisations receiving external resources are expected to demonstrate that funds have been used according to agreed objectives and financial rules. Reporting, monitoring and audit requirements should therefore not automatically be interpreted as evidence of problematic dependency, but it is more about the issue when donor accountability becomes the dominant accountability relationship while ignoring the downward accountability.

Table 15. Comparison of projects indicators: community accountability, upward accountability to donors (source: author)

Project	Community accountability	Upward accountability to donors
CUSP I/II	2	3
PASCAL	1	3
EU-ACT	1	N.e.

EnACT	N.e.	1
CSF III	1	3
STAR-Ghana II	3	3
Chilungamo/Tilitonse	3	2
RePaSOC	N.e.	2
CPA	1	3
PROSCIG	N.e.	2

The difference between the cases is notable - only STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse programmes received the maximum score of 3 for community accountability, while 3 projects, EnACT, RePaSOC and PROSCIG, receive “N.e.” because no sufficiently clear evidence of concrete CSO-to-community accountability mechanisms was identified in the available documentation. By contrast, 5 projects receive the maximum score for upward accountability, and a further 3 receive a score of 2.

Again, this pattern should nevertheless be interpreted with caution, because the “N.e.” score reflect that documentation is unavailable. Donor-funded projects routinely publish grant guidelines, action documents, financial requirements, monitoring frameworks, all of which tend to describe formal accountability to funders in detail. Informal or locally embedded accountability relationships may be less likely to appear in such documents. The findings from the assessment demonstrate that community accountability is less visible and less institutionally documented, rather than proving that it does not occur.

The institutional visibility of upward accountability

The evidence across the cases also concerns formal donor accountability. CUSP I/II provides a clear example - its Action Document establishes a monitoring system centred on the programme logical framework, technical and financial monitoring, annual and final reporting, evaluation and audit procedures. These mechanisms explain CUSP's score of 3 for upward accountability. Such requirements are understandable, because they allow the EU to monitor whether programme resources are being used according to agreed objectives and provide a basis for financial transparency. They also reveal where the most formalized accountability relationships are established - the programme's performance results are expressed through indicators, reports, and financial documentation, which must be submitted to donors, who often pass that information on to their superiors to higher management structure. However, at the community level, CUSP I/II shows some positive evidence. CSO platforms are expected to represent their members before local and

central authorities, and the programme refers to internal accountability mechanisms such as the NGO Quality Assurance Mechanism. However, the available documentation focuses more strongly on programme reporting, institutional capacity and coordination than on mechanisms through which communities directly assess CSO performance or influence ongoing activities. CUSP I/II therefore represents a case in which both directions of accountability exist, but donor accountability is more strongly institutionalised.

PASCAL displays an even clearer imbalance - its grant guidelines require compliance with EU procedures, including eligibility checks, assessment of financial and operational capacity, monitoring systems, expenditure verification and other aspects. The project analysis therefore assigns the maximum score of 3 for upward accountability. By contrast, PASCAL receives only 1 for community accountability. Its activities encourage citizen participation, awareness of rights and participation in local governance platforms, but the available evidence provides relatively little information on concrete mechanisms through which funded Angolan CSOs themselves report back to communities or allow their constituencies to evaluate their work. This reveals an important distinction between CSOs promoting government accountability and CSOs being accountable to communities - PASCAL encourages citizens and civil-society actors to participate in governance and demand responsiveness from public institutions, which may strengthen democratic accountability externally, but they do not automatically establish downward accountability within the CSO accountability to community itself.

CSF III is one more example illustrating an upward accountability structure. The programme was managed by the EU Delegation, supported by the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU), and local grant recipients were required to submit reports through this programme structure. Consequently, the score for top-down accountability is 3. In contrast, accountability to the community was rated at only 1 point, because CSF III sought to strengthen the voice of organizations representing citizens, but the available documentation focused primarily on the capacities of civil society organizations and grants. Furthermore, the evaluation report noted that local grantees attempted to promote transparency by sharing project reports, decisions, and financial information publicly, however, the evaluation found that transparency toward the public is inadequate.⁹⁶ This comparison is important because CSF III was explicitly designed to strengthen Ethiopian civil society, but nevertheless, the official accountability structure remained much more clearly oriented toward the programme's management structure than toward local constituents. This supports the broader conclusion presented in Section 4.5 that a project approach can shift organizations' focus on grant management, results, and donor procedures.

⁹⁶ EuroPlus Consulting & Management and Particip GmbH, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III*, 29.

CPA as case example also provides evidence of the practical effects donor accountability can have on local organisations. CPA grantees were required to comply with financial reporting, approved budgets and EU financial rules. The evaluation reported cases in which reports were rejected, preventing access to remaining funds. Some organisations consequently had to finance activities themselves, terminate projects or repay previously spent resources.⁹⁷ In this case, upward accountability therefore went beyond routine reporting, because compliance with the donor's financial system had direct consequences for whether organisations could continue accessing project resources. Of course, it is unclear exactly why the funding was reduced, as it is possible that this was related to an inability to carry out activities or other problems that may have arisen on the part of the grant receiver, rather than on the part of the donor or the intermediary. Nevertheless, the relationship between accountability and dependency becomes particularly visible here, because the donor not only finances the activity but also retains authority to determine whether expenditure is acceptable and whether further resources are released. Community targeting activities were nevertheless significant within CPA programme: supported organisations created government monitoring tools, citizen reporting platforms, workshops and consultations that allowed citizens to communicate demands to public authorities. Also, the project established a Pan-African consultation platform. All of these activities show the CSOs supports communities to hold governments accountable, but not CSOs themselves answerable to their members and constituencies. So, CPA provides a particularly useful illustration of the difference between accountability as a project objective and accountability to own community.

Cases where accountability operates in both directions

STAR-Ghana II and the Tilitonse provide the suggestion that upward and community accountability can coexist. STAR-Ghana II receives the maximum score of 3 on both indicators. Its community accountability was among the strongest in the sample. The programme sought to connect grassroots interventions with national policy processes, create platforms through which citizens, particularly marginalised groups, could demand change, and establish the STAR Ghana Foundation as an institution belonging to and serving Ghanaian society. At the same time, grant partners operated under substantial donor-accountability requirements, as the programme's grant manual formed part of its contractual obligations and required grantees to comply with donor regulations, audits and other formal financial procedures.

The Tilitonse case shows that grant partners established social-accountability clubs, community meetings, citizen forums, and other local monitoring mechanisms for public services

⁹⁷ Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa*, 43, 49, 57.

and resources, through which communities could raise concerns and demand responses from public institutions. These concrete mechanisms justify the maximum score of 3 for community accountability. At the same time, the Tilitonse Foundation remained accountable to the EU funding structure by reporting against the project logframe, monitoring disbursements and financial reporting, and participating in a Joint Technical Team with development partners as well as the Chilungamo Steering Committee, resulting in a partially high score for upward accountability.

Taken together, STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse programmes demonstrate that donor and community accountability can be combined. Both cases show that local organisations can comply with donor reporting and financial requirements while simultaneously maintaining strong transparency mechanisms of accountability to citizens and communities.

Accountability as a question of organisational orientation

As mentioned before, the documentary evidence suggests that donor accountability is generally tied to resources and contractual authority. Failure to meet donor requirements can lead to rejected expenditure, delayed payments, withheld funding or other contractual consequences, as demonstrated most clearly by CPA. Viewed from another perspective, community accountability is rarely directly linked to funding relationships. Communities may provide feedback or participate in monitoring, but the available data rarely indicates that they have a similar institutional authority to decide whether an organization will continue to receive resources from the programme/project funds.

Given this information, it can be said that this has implications for the relationship between ownership and dependence. If an organization's survival or continued operation depends on meeting the needs of its donors, and community approval has less influence on the ability to obtain resources, then local organizations will possibly shape their priorities and operations according to the requirements of external donors and implementers. Of course, this does not mean that local civil society organizations will stop to care for their communities, but in such cases, donors have greater influence in the country or region.

So, summarising the findings of the section, it could be said that the findings therefore do not support a simple opposition between upward and downward accountability. Instead, 3 different features are visible:

1. Some projects display strong upward accountability but relatively weak documented community accountability, as in PASCAL, CSF III and CPA.
2. Some cases contain limited evidence in both directions, particularly EnACT and EU-ACT.

3. Some cases demonstrate that strong community accountability can coexist with substantial donor accountability, as in STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse.

3.7. Summary of empirical findings

The preceding sections analysed ownership and donor dependency through separate project mechanisms: local priority-setting and strategic control, access to resources, intermediary structures, donor-defined priorities, projectisation, competitive funding and accountability. This section brings these findings together and explains the central theoretical proposition of the thesis: local ownership and donor dependency should not be understood as mutually exclusive outcomes of development cooperation. A project may provide local CSOs with meaningful control over priorities, resources and implementation while simultaneously remaining dependent on external finance, donor-defined procedures or intermediary structures.

The empirical evidence from 10 selected cases provides support for this proposition. The projects are not separated between the ownership and dependency dimensions, but instead, they occupy several combinations of these 2 dimensions. Most importantly, greater ownership does not consistently correspond to lower dependency and vice versa. STAR-Ghana II combines a very high ownership score of 17 with a high dependency score of 13. The Tilitonse also scores 17 on ownership while retaining a medium dependency score of 10 (*Table 9*). On the contrary, several projects with only medium ownership (CUSP I/II, PASCAL, CSF III and CPA) remain highly dependent. The cases therefore suggest that ownership can increase considerably without the structures generating dependency disappearing at the same rate. This finding supports the theoretical decision made in Chapter 2 to analyse ownership and dependency as distinct but interacting dimensions.

Distribution of the cases across the 2 dimensions

The combination of ownership and dependency scores produces 5 empirical configurations:

Table 16. Projects by ownership-dependency configuration (source: author)

Ownership-dependency configuration	Projects
Low ownership/ medium dependency	EnACT
Medium ownership/ medium dependency	EU-ACT, RePaSOC, PROSCIG
Medium ownership / high dependency	CUSP, PASCAL, CSF III, CPA
High ownership / medium dependency	Chilungamo/ Tilitonse
High ownership / high dependency	STAR-Ghana II

Low dependency/ ...	-
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The distribution itself is theoretically significant. 7 of the 10 cases fall within the medium-ownership range, 2 achieve high ownership and 1 fall within the low-ownership range. On the dependency dimension, 5 cases are classified as medium and 5 as high. Interestingly, no project falls within the low-dependency range.

Moreover, only 1 of the 4 theoretical corner configurations is directly represented by the empirical cases: STAR-Ghana II occupies the high-ownership/high-dependency category. There is no high-ownership/low-dependency case, no low-ownership/high-dependency case and no low-ownership/low-dependency case under the scoring thresholds used in the thesis. Most projects instead occupy the intermediate areas of the framework (*Figure 2*).

This does not weaken the ownership-dependency matrix. Rather, it shows that the matrix functions better as a relational analytical space than as a rigid four-category typology. The cases demonstrate degrees and combinations of ownership and dependency rather than 4 clearly separated forms of development cooperation. In empirical terms, the most important information is not whether a project perfectly matches one ideal type, but how far it moves along each dimension, and which mechanisms explain that movement.

This should not be interpreted as evidence that receiving EU funding automatically implies dependency. As established in the theoretical framework, the mere presence of external funding is not sufficient to demonstrate dependency. Furthermore, all 10 cases were selected precisely because they are EU-funded or co-funded projects in Africa, so some form of external funding is automatically inherent in the entire sample.

The empirical picture is therefore asymmetrical. Relatively high levels of local ownership are observable in several cases, while no comparable pattern of low donor dependency emerges. None of the selected projects falls within the low-dependency range. In simple terms this suggests that local ownership can be strengthened without dependency being reduced to the same extent.

High ownership does not require low dependency: the STAR-Ghana II case

STAR-Ghana II provides the clearest illustration of the central theoretical proposition because it combines the highest ownership score in the sample with high donor dependency.

Table 17. STAR- Ghana II project scores (source: author)

Ownership indicator	Maximum score	STAR Ghana II score	Dependency indicator	Maximum score	STAR Ghana II score
Local priority-setting	3	3	Donor-defined priorities	3	2
Decision-making power	3	2	Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	3	2
Control or access to resources	3	3	Short-term projectisation	3	1
Adaptation to local context	3	3	Competitive funding culture	3	3
Community accountability	3	3	Upward accountability to donors	3	3
Equal partnership	3	3	Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	2
Total	18	17	Total	18	13

Its ownership score of 17 reflects several unusually strong features. Ghanaian CSOs received extensive grant funding, local and grassroots concerns were connected to national-level policy processes, citizen participation and community accountability were central to the programme, and the transition toward the STAR Ghana Foundation sought to transform a donor-funded programme into a Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led institution ensuring the sustainability of the programme and local decision making. The project therefore went substantially beyond simply contracting Ghanaian organisations to deliver donor-defined activities. Yet these ownership gains did not eliminate the donor relationship - during STAR-Ghana II implementation period, the programme remained externally financed and was initially managed through a Christian Aid-led international consortium. Its grant system was competitive, and funded organisations remained subject to donor regulations, audits and reporting procedures. The programme's grant manual explicitly incorporated contractual obligations and audit rights.

Therefore, the “STAR-Ghana” programme is an example that rejects any assumption that a high degree of dependence inevitably leads to a low degree of responsibility, and vice versa.

It could be said that 2 dimensions, ownership and dependency, operated at partially different institutional levels - ownership worked more on the local level, while dependency was evident at the institutional level. The STAR Ghana II project combines institutional level and local level. The

project started with the idea of establishing funds and supporting them in such a way that the funds would continue to operate after the project ended, ensuring sustainability. This can also be considered an important aspect, as sustainability should be taken into account when designing projects, rather than only at the end of the project, thereby fostering greater ownership.

The same ownership score, different dependency: STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse cases

The comparison between STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse also important due to different scorings of dependency and ownership. Both projects receive an ownership score of 17, yet STAR-Ghana II receives a dependency score of 13, while Tilitonse receives 10.

Table 18. Comparison between STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse cases (source: author)

Ownership indicator	Maximum score	STAR Ghana II score	Tilitonse score	Dependency indicator	Maximum score	STAR Ghana II score	Tilitonse score
Local priority-setting	3	3	2	Donor-defined priorities	3	2	1
Decision-making power	3	2	3	Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	3	2	2
Control or access to resources	3	3	3	Short-term projectisation	3	1	2
Adaptation to local context	3	3	3	Competitive funding culture	3	3	2
Community accountability	3	3	3	Upward accountability to donors	3	3	2
Equal partnership	3	3	3	Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	2	1
Total	18	17	17	Total	18	13	10

The Tilitonse component displays strong local authority because the €2 million civil society grant facility was itself managed by a Malawian organisation. Tilitonse selected grant recipients, administered sub-grants, oversaw implementation, maintained its own governance structures and participated in the overall programmes Chilungamo Steering Committee Meetings. Community accountability was also strongly rooted through social-accountability clubs, community meetings, citizen forums, and monitoring of public services. The arrangement therefore localised not merely project implementation but a significant part of the intermediary and grant-management function.

Dependency nevertheless remained - programme originated within an externally financed cooperation framework, overarching objectives were established before the local grant process, grants continued to operate through funding windows; and Tilitonse remained subject to logical frameworks, financial reporting and donor authority.

Looking at the comparison between STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse, it suggests that different ownership and dependency mechanisms vary in strength across the 2 cases. For example, decision-making power is stronger in the Tilitonse case because the civil society grant facility was managed by a local Malawian organisation, which was responsible for selecting grant recipients, managing sub-grants and overseeing implementation. In STAR-Ghana II, programme management was initially located within an international consortium, although the programme increasingly transferred authority to Ghanaian actors through the establishment of the STAR Ghana Foundation. A similar difference can be observed in relation to dependency: in the Tilitonse case, the principal civil-society funding facility was managed locally, whereas in STAR-Ghana II the overall programme funding was initially managed through an international intermediary structure. These differences suggest that one mechanism may be stronger in one project and weaker in another, but this does not mean that a decrease in one ownership indicator automatically produces an increase in dependency, or vice versa. Some indicators may appear conceptually related - for example, the ownership indicator of equal partnership and the dependency indicator of upward accountability to donors, or adaptation to the local context and donor-defined priorities. However, as demonstrated throughout the empirical analysis and reflected in the individual project scores, a high score on one dimension does not necessarily correspond to a low score on the other - a project can therefore be highly adapted to the local context while still operating within donor-defined priorities, or it can have relatively equal partnerships while maintaining substantial upward accountability requirements.

Medium ownership within high dependency

The largest theoretically important cluster consists of CUSP I/II, PASCAL, CSF III and CPA. All 4 combine medium ownership with high dependency.

Table 19. Ownership and dependency scores of the 10 selected projects (highlight of medium ownership/ high dependency) (source: author)

	Project	Country/region	Ownership score	Ownership level	Dependency score	Dependency level
1	CUSP I/II	Uganda	12	Medium	14	High

2	PASCAL	Angola	11	Medium	16	High
3	EU-ACT	Nigeria	12	Medium	7	Medium
4	EnACT	Zambia	4	Low	8	Medium
5	CSF III	Ethiopia	9	Medium	15	High
6	STAR- Ghana II	Ghana	17	High	13	High
7	Chilungamo/Til itonse	Malawi	17	High	10	Medium
8	RePaSOC	Benin	12	Medium	12	Medium
9	CPA	Pan-African	12	Medium	15	High
10	PROSCIG	Cameroon	10	Medium	10	Medium

CUSP I/II supports Ugandan CSO capacities, platforms and networks and provides some representation for civil society within programme governance. At the same time, its priorities remain closely connected to EU and German cooperation frameworks, the principal financial envelope is managed by GIZ, and monitoring and accountability operate through formal donor reporting structures. PASCAL similarly gives Angolan organisations direct access to grants and allows them to manage individual actions. Nevertheless, local organisations must work within predetermined thematic priorities, competitive application procedures, short grant cycles and detailed EU compliance requirements, while the overall programme remains managed through European implementing organisations. CSF III provides another version of the same configuration. Ethiopian CSOs directly implemented grant contracts and benefited from substantial resources, yet the programme's dependency score remains high because funding access was structured through donor-defined calls, project-based contracts and competitive selection. The final evaluation identified a shift away from broader sector strengthening towards the administration of individual grant projects and EU procedures creating stronger dependency.⁹⁸

CPA demonstrates strong local implementation authority within this cluster. African consortium partners held significant responsibilities for grant management, regional advocacy, technical support and implementation, while African organisations designed locally relevant democratic-governance and civic-tech initiatives. Nevertheless, the overall project remained embedded in EU-defined funding and compliance arrangements; most grant cycles were short, competitive calls structured access, and financial procedures sometimes disrupted implementation.

⁹⁸EuroPlus Consulting, *Final Evaluation of Civil Society Fund III*, 20, 25.

These cases suggest that ownership can exist within the outside donor-defined sphere. Local organisations do not necessarily need to control the whole funding system in order to keep meaningful ownership. They can manage projects, adapt interventions, influence implementation and participate in governance structures, but they need to keep in mind that still their authority remains bounded by decisions made at higher, and usually, external levels concerning the programme envelope, thematic eligibility, contractual conditions and reporting structure. This can be described as limited ownership - local CSOs have significant authority, but that authority operates within externally established scope and limits.

A notable trend emerges in the majority of the projects: in 4 of out 10 projects in Africa moderate level of local autonomy is combined with a relatively high degree of dependence on donors. This moderate level of autonomy is encouraging, as it indicates that local civil society organizations often play a significant role in implementing projects, managing resources, and adapting to local conditions. However, the continuing high level of dependence raises important questions regarding the future planning of EU-funded civil society programmes, particularly with regard to the transfer of strategic authority, control over funding, dependence on intermediaries.

Medium-medium cases

EU-ACT, RePaSOC and PROSCIG occupy the medium range on both dimensions. These cases represent neither strong local ownership nor particularly high documented dependency, but instead, they demonstrate mixed cases in which local and external forms of authority coexist without either becoming dominant.

Table 20. Ownership and dependency scores of the 10 selected projects (highlight of medium ownership/ medium dependency) (source: author)

	Project	Country/region	Ownership score	Ownership level	Dependency score	Dependency level
1	CUSP I/II	Uganda	12	Medium	14	High
2	PASCAL	Angola	11	Medium	16	High
3	EU-ACT	Nigeria	12	Medium	7	Medium
4	EnACT	Zambia	4	Low	8	Medium
5	CSF III	Ethiopia	9	Medium	15	High
6	STAR- Ghana II	Ghana	17	High	13	High
7	Chilungamo/Ti	Malawi	17	High	10	Medium

	litonse					
8	RePaSOC	Benin	12	Medium	12	Medium
9	CPA	Pan-African	12	Medium	15	High
10	PROSCIG	Cameroon	10	Medium	10	Medium

EU-ACT provides Nigerian CSOs with significant access to grants and invests in organisational capacity, networks and coalitions. 98 grants were identified in the programme documentation, demonstrating significant local access to resources. At programme level, however, the British Council remain accountable implementing organisation. EU-ACT's relatively lower dependency score must be interpreted especially carefully, because 2 dependency indicators (competitive funding and upward accountability) receive ‘N.e.’ due to unavailability sufficient available evidence. RePaSOC also represents a more clearly documented mixed case. 49 Beninese CSOs received direct support, and the local organization Maison de la Société Civile held an important implementation role, while responsibility for the wider programme was shared with government institutions, GIZ and international technical assistance. At the same time, most grants were competitively selected, and grant recipients remained subject to formal reporting, procurement and expenditure-verification procedures. PROSCIG similarly combines organisational support and local CSO participation with continued external programme control. Cameroonian organisations receive grants and participate in advocacy and implementation, but GIZ and UNFPA retain the principal financial and contractual authority over the programme.

These mixed cases support the argument that dependence and autonomy can coexist - a project does not necessarily have to be either local in scope or donor-dependent, as authority can be distributed differently across the areas of priority setting, implementation, financing, reporting, and institutional management.

Low ownership and medium dependency, but limited data

EnACT is also important case -with configuration of low ownership and medium dependency.

The project is strongly adapted to Zambia's political and justice context and creates opportunities for civil-society participation in law-making, transparency and access to justice. Nevertheless, available documentation provides limited evidence that local CSOs control programme-level resources or strategic decision-making. The project remains commissioned by BMZ, co-financed by the EU and implemented by GIZ.

Not a lot can be said for this case, because the case received a lot of “N.e.” (in such indicators as local priority-setting, control or access to resources, community accountability, equal partnerships, support “though” CSPOs instead of support “to” CSOs, competitive funding culture) meaning that no available information to evaluate the indicators were found in the available documents.

This issue is also academically and practically important because EU external actions are financed through public resources. For this reason, a reasonable expectation is that sufficient information on project objectives, implementation arrangements, evaluations and the use of funds should be publicly accessible in order to enable transparency. The research initially proceeded with the expectation that the relevant project documentation could be obtained relatively easily through publicly available sources. In practice, however, access to documentation was often limited and process itself - difficult. To improve the accuracy of the analysis, the author contacted different project stakeholders, including EU Delegations, development-cooperation organisations/institutions and evaluation companies, requesting evaluations, project descriptions, action documents and other relevant materials. Only a very limited number of these contacts provided information that could be directly used in the research.

Levels of localization

The comparative analysis suggests that localisation in EU-funded civil-society projects does not occur as a single or uniform process but can be observed at three analytically distinct levels: localisation of activities, localisation of resources and localisation of authority. At localization of activities level, projects are adapted to national political, institutional and social conditions, including specific governance challenges, civic-space restrictions and the needs of particular communities. Local CSOs may play an important role in adjusting activities, identifying relevant target groups and implementing interventions in ways that reflect local circumstances. However, this form of localisation remains primarily operational: a project can be highly responsive to the local context while its overall objectives, funding structure and strategic priorities continue to be determined externally. The second level is the localisation of resources, which occurs when local CSOs receive and manage grants or other project resources directly. This gives local organisations greater discretion over implementation and can strengthen their operational ownership. Nevertheless, the transfer of resources should not be evaluated as equals with the transfer of financial authority. In several cases, local organisations managed individual grants while donors or intermediary organisations continued to determine eligibility criteria, overall funding envelopes, grant-selection procedures and contractual requirements. The third and deepest level is the localisation of authority. This occurs when local actors influence strategic priorities, participate in

or control the selection of grant recipients, hold formal roles in programme governance, manage funding mechanisms, or exercise authority over programme-level resources. This form of localisation was considerably less common and was most clearly visible in cases such as STAR-Ghana II and the Tilitonse-linked support, where local institutions assumed intermediary, grant-management or governance functions. The distinction between these three levels is important because it suggests that localisation may advance unevenly: activities can be localised without resources being fully localised, and resources can be transferred without equivalent authority over the structures governing them.

Explanation of the coexistence of ownership and dependency

Taken together, the 10 cases suggest that coexistence occurs because ownership and dependency are often generated through different parts of the project.

Ownership tends to increase where local actors gain:

- meaningful influence over priorities and implementation;
- formal and informal decision-making roles and recognition as co-implementers or institutional partners rather than only beneficiaries;
- direct access to resources;
- authority to adapt activities to local conditions;
- community accountability mechanisms.

Dependency persists where:

- broad programme priorities remain externally framed;
- the main financial envelope remains outside local control;
- support is organised through project-based and competitive grants;
- international intermediaries retain contractual authority over the whole implementation and financial management;
- continued access to resources depends on donor compliance procedures;
- reporting and accountability remain strongly oriented upward.

The crucial point is that these mechanisms can be present simultaneously with the clear distribution of the authority, management, priority setting and other factors described above.

What mitigates dependency without weakening ownership?

The cases also provide evidence about which project mechanism appear most promising for combining strong ownership with comparatively lower dependency.

The strongest examples suggest 4 mechanisms:

1. Local control over intermediary functions as “service providers”. For example, Tilitonse did not simply receive donor resources; it managed the civil society grant facility and selected other organisations for funding.
2. Institutional sustainable support beyond individual grants. For example, STAR-Ghana's transition towards a national Foundation attempt to create structures that extend beyond specific project contracts.
3. Local freedom within broad funding objectives. For instance, Tilitonse operated inside an EU-defined governance framework, but the Foundation retained considerable discretion in translating those objectives into its own strategic and grant-making choices.
4. Importance of community accountability and local governance structures. STAR-Ghana and Tilitonse are again the strongest cases.

It is worth mentioning that these mechanisms do not eliminate the dependency itself, but they mitigate it.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined the relationship between local civil-society ownership and donor dependency in EU-funded development cooperation civil-society projects in Africa. It started from an apparent tension within contemporary development cooperation - on the one hand, the EU and the wider international development community increasingly emphasise ownership, localisation, partnership and the recognition of civil-society organisations as independent development actors, but on the other hand, the resources that enable local organisations to operate are frequently provided through externally designed programmes, donor priorities, international intermediaries, competitive grant mechanisms and formal reporting systems. The central question was how, and to what extent, the design and funding mechanisms of selected EU-funded development cooperation civil-society projects enable local CSOs ownership while creating or mitigating donor dependency. The research approached this question by first distinguishing local ownership from donor project-level dependency conceptually. This distinction was necessary because these two frameworks often seem to be treated as opposite conditions, but this research evaluated if it is possible that both of conditions could be seen as separate but interacting dimensions.

Local ownership was defined at the project and organisational level rather than only at the level of partner governments. This was an important adaptation of the common aid-effectiveness literature. Whereas the Paris Declaration primarily associates ownership with partner-country leadership over national development strategies,⁹⁹ this thesis asked who exercises meaningful influence and control within development cooperation civil-society projects. This project-level understanding emphasised local priority-setting, decision-making power, control or access to resources, adaptation to the local context, community accountability and equal partnership which were selected as the indicators for the research for ownership identification. The definition particularly followed Whitfield's distinction between significant control and the weaker idea of commitment or participation: local actors agreeing with or participating in a programme does not necessarily mean that they control it. The methodological framework therefore explicitly defined ownership through meaningful influence and control rather than participation alone.

Donor dependency was similarly defined more broadly than the simple receipt of external finance and funds. The project-level dependency was shaped as extent to which project-supported activities, access to resources and implementation opportunities are structured around externally controlled funding and institutional arrangements. The thesis examined the extent to which donor-defined priorities, support “through” rather than “to” CSOs, short-term projectisation, competitive grant mechanisms, upward accountability and international control of funding shaped the position of local organisations, which were selected as indicators of dependency evaluation of the projects. This approach reflected the literature review's argument that funding structures can influence CSOs priorities, roles and accountability even where local organisations keep considerable implementation authority.

The empirical analysis then compared 10 EU-funded or EU co-funded development cooperation civil-society projects in Africa. The cases were specifically selected to include variation in implementation arrangements, including delegated cooperation, internationally led programmes, grant facilities, multi-donor programmes, regional support and grassroots-oriented grant mechanisms and all of these projects had to support the civil society organizations, networks and structures in Africa. Each project was assessed using 6 ownership and 6 dependency indicators, with scores ranging from 1 to 3 for each indicator and a maximum score of 18 for each dimension. The scoring framework was not intended to provide a statistically representative measurement of EU civil society across Africa, because it is not possible with the taken scope of sample. Its purpose was to make a structured qualitative comparison possible and to identify recurring programme/project-level patterns that was discussed in the Chapter 4 Empirical Analysis.

⁹⁹OECD, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, 3.

Main conclusions

The central conclusion of the thesis is that local **ownership and donor dependency are not mutually exclusive and can coexist with each other**. Empirical evidence does not support the claim that it is possible to move easily from dependence on donors at one end to local autonomy at the other. On the contrary, local governance and dependence on external factors coexist in various combinations and at different levels. The distribution of the 10 projects confirms this pattern. 7 cases fall within the medium-ownership range, 2 achieve high ownership and 1 fall within the low-ownership range. On the dependency dimension, 5 cases are classified as medium and 5 as high. None of the 10 projects falls within the low-dependency range, indicating that external reliance remains a structural feature across all cases.

From the empirical evidence it is seen that **high dependency does not automatically imply low ownership** and vice versa. STAR-Ghana II provides the clear illustration: it scores 17 for ownership while simultaneously scoring 13 for dependency. The programme enabled substantial local authority and contributed to the establishment of a Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led foundation, yet it remained externally funded within programme scope, initially internationally managed, competitively grant-based, and subject to donor compliance, audits and reporting requirements. It demonstrates that a project can transfer local authority while external financing and organizational dependency remain. The 2 dimensions therefore operate independently rather than as opposites. The Tilitonse reinforces this conclusion from a different angle. It also achieves high ownership (score of 17) but with medium dependency (score of 10). Its stronger localisation is linked to the fact that the funding intermediary itself was localised: the Malawian Tilitonse Foundation managed grants, selected recipients and oversaw implementation. However, the programme still operated within an EU-funded framework with donor reporting and compliance obligations. This leads to a key finding that localising implementation is not the same as localising authority. Even when local actors manage delivery structures, strategic and financial control may remain externally defined.

Across the cases, **localisation appears at 3 different levels:**

- **localisation of activities** - where projects are adapted to national contexts, governance conditions and civic-space realities. This is the most common and strongest form of localisation observed in the sample. However, it does not necessarily extend to decision-making power over programme design.

- **localisation of resources** - where local CSOs directly receive and manage grants. This strengthens operational ownership, but the broader financial architecture such as eligibility rules, funding envelopes and allocation mechanisms, often remains externally controlled.
- **localisation of authority** - where local actors gain control over grant systems, governance structures and strategic direction. This deeper form of localisation is visible mainly in STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse, where local institutions have intermediary or governing roles.

Combining all 3 levels, this should be considered a desirable objective and a goal to strive for in all development cooperation projects. The project should enable local organizations to lead the activities, manage the funds, and exercise decision-making power over these activities.

The findings also confirm that **donor dependency extends beyond finance**. It is embedded in procedural and institutional structures, including priority-setting, application procedures, contract duration, monitoring systems and reporting requirements. These mechanisms shape what local CSOs can do, even when funding is given to the local organizations to spend. Evidence from PASCAL, CSF III and CPA illustrates this, because in all 3 cases, local organisations managed grants implementation but operated within donor-defined priorities, competitive selection systems, short funding cycles and complex compliance frameworks.

A further conclusion concerns accountability. Across **most cases, upward accountability to donors is more formalised and visible than downward accountability to communities**. Reporting systems, audits and logical frameworks are consistently documented, while community accountability mechanisms are less systematically institutionalised. It is apparent that, in order to increase the ownership of the development cooperation projects, consideration should be given to formalizing commitments to the community. However, this does not imply that community accountability is absent - STAR-Ghana II and Tilitonse programmes demonstrate that upward and downward accountability can coexist when both forms of accountability are clearly incorporated into the programme's structure. However, these are just 2 out of 10 projects, so the community accountability should be taken into account for further design of development cooperation projects in Africa.

The analysis also shows that the identity of the implementing agency alone does not determine the level of local ownership or donor dependency. Projects implemented by the same organisation, particularly GIZ, displayed different combinations of ownership and dependency across the selected cases (CUSP I/II, PROSCIG and EnACT). This suggests that implementation practices are shaped not only by the institutional characteristics of the intermediary, but also by the

specific project design, country context, funding arrangements, governance structures and the degree of authority transferred to local CSOs.

Overall, the research question can be answered as follows:

EU-funded development cooperation civil-society projects enable stronger local ownership when local CSOs gain substantive authority over priorities, decisions, resources, governance and accountability structures. On the contrary, donor dependency appears when funding systems remain externally defined through donor priorities, international intermediaries, competitive and project-based funding models, externally controlled financial structures and dominant upward accountability requirements. Importantly, the findings show that reducing dependency does not require eliminating donor involvement but rather extending localisation beyond implementation to include local financial and institutional control. Even then, the cases demonstrate that strong local ownership can coexist with persistent forms of external dependency.

Discussion of the findings in the literature

The findings both confirm and specify several arguments developed in the literature review and theoretical framework.

1. The findings confirm the distinction between participation and ownership. The Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda establish ownership and broader participation as central principles of effective development cooperation,¹⁰⁰ but these frameworks primarily operate at the level of partner countries and governments. The literature review identified this as a gap for analysing civil-society projects. By transferring the ownership question to local CSOs, the empirical analysis demonstrates why participation alone is insufficient.
2. The findings also noticed the Whitfield's emphasized distinction between ownership as substantive control and ownership as commitment.¹⁰¹ Local organisations may participate in committees, consultations and implementation while having relatively little influence over the programme's original strategic architecture. The empirical evidence therefore supports an even stronger understanding of ownership: what matters is not merely whether local actors are present in the programme/project implementation, but at what level they are able to decide.

¹⁰⁰OECD, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, 3; OECD, *Accra Agenda for Action*, 2.

¹⁰¹Whitfield, *Ownership and the Donor-Recipient Relationship*, 5.

3. The findings support OECD arguments concerning direct funding and the distinction between support “to” and support “through” civil society.¹⁰² The OECD literature used in this thesis stresses that CSOs should be supported as independent development actors with their own priorities, plans and approaches and distinguishes such support from arrangements in which they primarily deliver externally defined programme objectives and are considered more like “service providers” than meaningful implementers with equal partnership.¹⁰³ The empirical analysis also confirms that direct resource access matters. Projects in which local organisations receive and manage grants generally provide more operational ownership than in projects in which local organisations participate without control of resources. However, the findings also show that direct funding encourages ownership but that does not mean that dependency vanishes - a local CSOs can receive a direct grant while the donor determines the thematic priorities, duration, selection rules and reporting requirements. Moreover, the analysis clarifies the direct-funding aspect by also indicating that there is difference between direct access to resources and control over the overall project funding - latter encourages the ownership.
4. The findings also consistent with the OECD's concern about intermediaries and competitive funding. The literature review notes that competitive calls may create burdens for small or informal organisations, favour larger and more professionalised actors and generate competition rather than collaboration.¹⁰⁴ The empirical cases provide concrete examples - CSF III's evaluation found that competitive arrangements divided organisations between successful and unsuccessful applicants and that some local CSOs perceived international partnerships as improving their chances of obtaining support. CPA programme similarly identified administrative and eligibility barriers for less professionalised organisations. These findings also resonate with Giffen and Judge, who argue that donor systems can favour larger and more professionalised NGOs because these organisations are easier to fund, monitor and evaluate.¹⁰⁵ The literature review additionally notes that heavy administrative procedures can disadvantage other not that professional or smaller CSOs.¹⁰⁶ The empirical analysis does not establish that all competitive EU funding systematically excludes grassroots organisations (some of the mentioned grassroots organizations as important target of the programme/project), but it

¹⁰²OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 24.

¹⁰³OECD, *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society*, 30.

¹⁰⁴OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 25–26; OECD, *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society*, 39.

¹⁰⁵Giffen et al, *Civil Society Policy and Practice in Donor Agencies*, 15-17

¹⁰⁶OECD, *Funding Civil Society in Partner Countries*, 28-29.

provides evidence of mechanisms (such as call for proposals in which experience is significantly valued) through which such unequal access can emerge.

5. The findings strongly support the literature on projectisation. Banks, Hulme and Edwards emphasise the competing expectations faced by NGOs and the possibility that donor funding systems can strengthen professionalised organisations while weakening their political or grassroots orientation.¹⁰⁷ Campolina and Philips similarly warn that short-term project funding can encourage organisations to organise around fundable activities, outputs and donor timelines rather than longer-term social transformation.¹⁰⁸ Some programmes provide particularly clear empirical support for these concerns. CSF III is especially important because the evaluation itself identified a shift from broader sector-strengthening ambitions towards management of individual grants and project outputs. At the same time, the results of the research shows that projectisation combining with the sustainability intentions could provide positive results – CUSP I/II and STAR-Ghana II show that project-based funding can be combined with longer-term organisational development, institutional strengthening and sustainability strategies.
6. The accountability findings provide substantial support for Ebrahim's distinction between upward and downward accountability. The literature review notes Ebrahim's argument that NGO accountability often becomes strongly oriented towards donors while accountability towards communities and internal constituencies remains less developed.¹⁰⁹ This pattern is visible across the empirical cases. Donor reporting structures were considerably easier to identify than accountability to organizations constituencies mechanisms. The research also showed that upward accountability could be present together with the downward accountability and that both can coexist.
7. The findings also provide a way of interpreting Manners' concept of Normative Power Europe. The literature review describes the EU as an actor that promotes democracy, human rights, rule of law, participation, gender equality and good governance through its external action.¹¹⁰ These normative priorities are highly visible across the 10 projects that is very commendable. However, the empirical findings suggest that the analytical issue is not whether democracy, participation or gender equality are normatively desirable in the local context, but more who defines and interprets these priorities within the project relationship. The research shows that it should be the local community - normative

¹⁰⁷Banks, et al, "NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited, 710.

¹⁰⁸Campolina et al, "Projectisation of Donor Funding," 2-3.

¹⁰⁹Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice," 814-816.

¹¹⁰Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 242-243.

influence becomes relevant to ownership when externally defined concepts and objectives determine which activities local civil society organizations can receive funding for, without having the corresponding power to set the local agenda. However, it could be strongly said that this empirical analysis neither disproves nor directly tests Normative Power Europe. This conclusion should be taken as potential further research.

Taken together, the interaction with the literature supports the central theoretical conclusion of the thesis. The findings confirm critical concerns regarding donor-defined agendas, projectisation, competition, intermediary control and upward accountability, but they also demonstrate significant local participation - local CSOs are not simply passive recipients of donor structures, but they should be able to adapt programmes, manage resources, shape implementation, create networks and, in the strongest cases, assume governance and intermediary functions themselves.

Effects of the methodological limitations

The methodological limitations discussed in the methodology part also affect how the empirical findings should be interpreted. Challenges related to the availability of project documentation may have led to some lack of specificity in the evaluation. Projects for which detailed evaluations, grant manuals, and implementation documents provided significantly more evidence regarding the distribution of decision-making authority, funding procedures, reporting requirements, and the roles of intermediaries than projects for which only brief programme/project descriptions were available. Therefore, the differences in scores may partly reflect differences in what was publicly documented, rather than solely differences in how the projects were organized.

The use of “N.e.” (no evidence) is particularly important in this respect. “N.e.” indicates that sufficient evidence concerning a particular indicator could not be identified in the documents examined, but it does not say that the corresponding mechanism or arrangement was absent in practice. This automatically lowers the overall dependency or ownership score. However, during the empirical analysis, attention was drawn to such cases, and they were reported in order to avoid rushed conclusions.

Reliance primarily on donor- and project-generated documentation may also have influenced the findings in another way. Formal documents are more likely to record official governance structures, planned consultation processes and stated partnership arrangements than informal bargaining, disagreement or unequal influence between participating organisations. This could lead formalised dimensions of local ownership to appear more visible than informal constraints on that ownership. Conversely, donor reporting and compliance arrangements are often documented in

considerable detail and may therefore be easier to identify than less formal forms of community accountability. The limited response from project stakeholders further restricted the possibility of verifying these documentary findings.

Finally, the sample of 10 cases limits the accurateness of the findings. The identified 5 patterns should be understood as patterns observed within the selected projects rather than as evidence that all EU-funded civil-society interventions in Africa operate in the same way. A larger comparative sample combined with interviews, organisational financial data and systematic analysis of grant-selection processes would provide a stronger basis for assessing how widely the patterns identified in this thesis extend beyond the selected cases.

Future research directions

The limitations and findings of this thesis suggest several directions for future research.

The most important would be to complement project documentation with direct evidence from local CSOs. Interviews with grant recipients, unsuccessful applicants, grassroots organisations, local intermediary organisations and former programme staff could test whether the formal ownership mechanisms identified in project documents correspond to participants' experiences. Such research could examine whether local organisations felt able to reject donor priorities, modify budgets, challenge intermediary decisions or maintain their own agendas when those agendas did not correspond to available funding calls.

Particular attention should be given to organisations that did not receive funding. Project evaluations naturally provide more information about successful grantees than unsuccessful applicants. Yet competitive funding systems may shape the wider civil-society environment precisely through exclusion. Research comparing funded and unfunded organisations could therefore provide stronger evidence concerning whether competitive mechanisms favour larger, professionalised CSOs and how unsuccessful organisations respond to donor priorities.

Second, future research should examine ownership and dependency after the programme/project ends. This thesis primarily assesses project arrangements during implementation. A stronger test of dependency would examine what happens after donor financing ends. It is important to evaluate, if locally supported organisations continue the same activities, do networks and coalitions survive after the given support, and more.

Third, future research should examine community accountability in much greater depth. Public donor documentation was particularly weak in demonstrating how local CSOs remain accountable to their own members and constituencies. Interviews, organisational records and

community-level research could determine whether this reflects an actual weakness in programme design or simply the limited visibility of community accountability within donor documentation.

Fourth, an interesting direction for future research would be to examine alternative implementation models that involve direct cooperation and exchange between EU-based local civil society organisations and local CSOs in Africa country, with shared decision-making authority built into the project structure. None of the projects analysed in this thesis clearly reflected such a model. A more horizontally structured partnership, in which EU-based CSOs and African CSOs jointly define priorities, manage parts of the funding and share governance responsibilities, could be a feasible alternative worth further investigation.

Fifth, future research could investigate whether the involvement of local evaluators, international experts or mixed evaluation teams affects the accessibility of EU funding for local CSOs and whether it influences the extent to which locally defined priorities are recognised within competitive grant processes.

Finally, comparative research could extend beyond the EU. Comparing EU civil-society funding with bilateral donors, foundations, country or region-specific cooperation or locally financed civil-society mechanisms would help determine which of the patterns identified here are specifically related to EU project architecture and which reflect broader features of international development financing.

ANNEXES:

Annex 1 - Analysis of the projects

Annex 2 - Declaration of AI usage

SUMMARY

Master's thesis title: *Ownership or/and Dependency? EU-Funded Civil Society Projects in Africa and the Politics of Local Ownership in Development Cooperation*

The thesis examines the relationship between local civil society organisations ownership and donor dependency in EU-funded development cooperation projects in Africa. The research problem arises from the tension between donors' stated aim of strengthening CSOs as independent actors and the risk that funding priorities, project procedures, accountability requirements and intermediary organisations may constrain local ownership. The aim is to assess how, and to what extent, project design and funding arrangements enable local CSO ownership while creating or mitigating donor dependency. The central research question is: *How, and to what extent, do the design and funding arrangements of selected EU-funded civil-society projects in Africa enable local CSO ownership while creating or mitigating donor dependency?*

The study applies a comparative qualitative analysis of 10 projects supported by a structured scoring framework. It examines mechanisms related to priority-setting, decision-making, resource control, local adaptation, partnership, funding, projectisation and accountability. The findings show that ownership and dependency are not opposite ends and may coexist within the same project. Several cases demonstrate relatively high local ownership, yet none falls within the low-dependency category. Local CSOs often play meaningful roles in implementation and grant management, while strategic priorities, control over the main funding envelope and accountability systems frequently remain influenced by donors or intermediaries. The thesis therefore recommends greater attention not only to localising activities and funding, but also to transferring strategic and financial decision-making authority, supporting longer-term institutional development and improving transparency of project documentation. Its significance lies in showing that the key issue is not only how much funding reaches local organisations, but also how far decision-making authority comes with it.

SANTRAUKA

Magistro darbo pavadinimas: *Nuosavybė ir/ar priklausomybė? ES finansuojami pilietinės visuomenės projektai Afrikoje ir vietinės nuosavybės politika vystomojo bendradarbiavimo srityje*

Šioje darbe nagrinėjamas ryšys tarp vietos pilietinės visuomenės organizacijų nuosavybės ir priklausomybės nuo donorų ES finansuojamuose vystomojo bendradarbiavimo projektuose Afrikoje. Tyrimo problema kyla dėl prieštaravimo tarp donorų deklaruojamo siekio stiprinti

pilietinės visuomenės organizacijas kaip nepriklausomus veikėjus ir rizikos, kad finansavimo prioritetai, projektinės procedūros, atskaitomybės reikalavimai bei tarpininkai gali riboti vietinių organizacijų savarankiškumą. Darbo tikslas yra nustatyti, kaip ir koku mastu pasirinktų projektų dizainas ir finansavimo modeliai sudaro sąlygas vietinių pilietinių visuomenių organizacijų nuosavybei, kartu kurdami arba mažindami priklausomybę nuo donorų. Pagrindinis tyrimo klausimas: *kaip ir koku mastu pasirinktų ES finansuojamų pilietinės visuomenės projektų Afrikoje dizainas ir finansavimo susitarimai sudaro sąlygas vietinių pilietinių organizacijų nuosavybei, kartu kurdami arba mažindami priklausomybę nuo donorų?*

Tyrime taikyta lyginamoji kokybinė dešimties projektų atvejų analizė, papildyta struktūruota vertinimo sistema. Vertinti prioritetų nustatymo, sprendimų priėmimo, resursų kontrolės, pritaikymo prie vietinio konteksto, partnerystės, finansavimo, projektizacijos ir atskaitomybės mechanizmai. Tyrimas parodė, kad nuosavybė ir priklausomybė nėra priešingybės ir gali egzistuoti kartu. Keliuose projektuose nustatytas aukštas vietinės nuosavybės lygis, tačiau nė vienas projektas nepateko į žemos priklausomybės kategoriją. Vietinė pilietinė visuomenė dažnai turėjo reikšmingą vaidmenį įgyvendinant veiklas ir valdant atskiras dotacijas, tačiau strateginiai prioritetai, pagrindinių lėšų kontrolė ir atskaitomybės sistemos dažnai išliko donorų ar tarpininkų įtakoje. Todėl rekomenduojama daugiau dėmesio skirti ne tik finansavimo ir veiklų lokalizavimui, bet ir realiam strateginės bei finansinės sprendimų galios perdavimui vietos organizacijoms, ilgalaikiam instituciniam stiprinimui ir didesniam projektų dokumentacijos skaidrumui. Šiame darbe taip pat parodoma, kad svarbu vertinti ne tik tai, kiek finansavimo pasiekia vietos pilietines organizacijas, bet ir kiek sprendimų priėmimo galios perduodama kartu su šiuo finansavimu.

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ANNEX 1

ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS

Selected 10 projects profiles:

	Project	Implementation period	EU-funding/ co-funding	Lead implementer	Main CSO support modality	Main documents used for analysis
1	Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme - CUSP I / CUSP II COUNTRY - URGANDA	CUSP I: 48 months (2018 - 2022) CUSP II (under GCSP III programme) : 2023 - 2027 <i>periods are identified differently in different sources</i>	CUSP I total 26,9 million euros: (25 million - EU, 1,9 million - Germany) CUSP II (with the GCSP III programme) total 44,7 million (30 million - EU)	GIZ	Technical assistance and capacity development for CSOs, support to CSO networks/platforms, cooperation between state and non-state actors, governance and accountability support. Focus area - CSOs working in wide range of sectors such as Infrastructure, (including transport, water, energy), Green Economy, Rural Development, Good Governance. Grant financing (mentioned but not elaborated)	https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/45745_en https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uganda/eu-and-germany-provide-ugx-637-billion-support-civil-society-uganda_en https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2025-en-uganda-governance-civil-society.pdf https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2024-en-CUSP-bulletin-vol-3.pdf https://www.giz.de/sites/default/files/media/pkb-document/2025-10/giz2025-en-uganda-4th-cusp-bulletin.pdf https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/3._cusp_-_civil_society_in_uganda_support_programme_-_action_document.pdf https://kampala.diplo.de/ug-en/2100904-2100904

2	PASCAL - Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola COUNTRY - ANGOLA	2021-2025	5.8 million EU funding	FIAP and CPVA	Call for proposals, participatory governance, civil society participation in local decision-making, communication and awareness activities.	https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/E-dokumentas.pdf https://www.eecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/3_cusp_civil_society_in_uganda_support_programme_-_action_document.pdf https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/proyectos_fiiapp/pascal-support-to-civil-society-in-local-governance-in-angola/ https://cpva.lt/en/project/support-to-civil-society-in-local-governance-in-angola-pascal https://cpva.lt/en/public-procurements/procurement-and-grant-contracts https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/noticias/pascal-project-promotes-citizen-participation-in-angola/ https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/noticias/fiiapp-shares-aragon-experience-in-citizen-participation-with-angola/ https://cpva.lt/en/calls-for-proposals/call-for-proposals-under-support-to-civil-society-in-local-governance-in-angola-pascal https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/guidelines-for-applicants_pascal.pdf https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/blog_fiiapp/luzia-and-the-new-voices-changing-angola/ https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/noticias/angolas-governments-works-towards-participatory-governance
3	Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation -ACT (EU-	2019-2024	EU-funded, 13,8 million EUR	British Council	CSO capacity-building, CSO networks and coalitions, multi-stakeholder dialogue,	https://www.justice-security.ng/sites/default/files/act_factsheet_dec2023.pdf https://www.justice-

	ACT) COUNTRY - NIGERIA				grants to Nigerian CSOs. Grants financing.	security.ng/sites/default/files/act_newsletter_jul2019-jan2020_final.pdf https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bc7a6e3e-a123-45af-8e6a-3924a84f8dca_en https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/external_version_july_2021_edition_-_eud_nigeria_project_compendium.pdf https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/agents_for_citizen-driven_transformation_fed_2019_406_876_0.pdf https://www.justice-security.ng/sites/default/files/act_programme_closure_-_national_programme_closeout_-_final.pdf https://www.justice-security.ng/programmes/act
4	Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT) COUNTRY - ZAMBIA	2021-2026; <i>EU co-funding only for period of 2023-2025</i>	EU co-funded (13, 65 million EUR; total implementation phase 27,48 million EUR)	GIZ	Civil society participation, policy reform, civic space, transparency, legal aid and access to justice	https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2023-en-enabling-access-justice-civil-society-participation-transparency-enact.pdf https://www.giz.de/en/projects/promotion-participation-transparency-and-access-justice https://thehealingbalmfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/EnACT-Newsletter-July-2025.pdf https://datastore.iatistandard.org/activity/XI-IATI-EC_INTPA-2022-PC-23455
5	Civil Society Fund III (CSF)	2018/2019-2023	Co-funded by EU. Total budget	EU Delegation to	Grant funding through calls for proposals to 27	https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ethiopia/civil-society-fund_en

	III) COUNTRY - ETHIOPIA	<i>periods are identified differently in different sources</i>	16,62 million EUR (EU contribution - 16 million)	Ethiopia, supported by Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) of different EU Member states such as Spain, Belgium, Sweden, etc.	CSO projects (one was cancelled due to compliance issues) and technical assistance (capacity building, policy dialogue) to civil society actors.	https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3a91aadb-d5a0-472e-b5ea-bdb8b863ccd8_en https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/evaluation-brief-eus-support-ethiopian-civil-society-through-civil-society-fund-iii-programme_en https://www.ceas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/csf_iii_info_flyer_for_eud.pdf https://www2.fundsforngos.org/latest-funds-for-ngos/eu-civil-society-fund-csf-iii-call-for-proposals-for-large-grants-2019-in-ethiopia/
6	STAR-Ghana II / STAR Ghana Foundation COUNTRY - GHANA	2015/2016-2020 <i>periods are identified differently in different sources</i>	GBP 21-22 million (approx. 24 million EUR), funded by UK, Denmark and the EU	Consortium of Christian Aid, SDDirect, ODI, and Nkum Associates consortium	Voice and empowerment programme through grants and technical assistance on themes such as accountability and responsiveness, poverty and equality.	https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/programmes/star-ghana-foundation https://star-ghana.org/?action=download&learning_file_id=1881 https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/star-ghana-annual-report-2019.pdf https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/STAR-Ghana_Gender%2BEquality%2Band%2BSocial%2BInclusion%2BStrategy.pdf https://ajabuadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-STAR-Ghana-2-Evaluation-Report_Ajabu-Advisors.pdf https://star-ghana.org/ https://www.sddirect.org.uk/project/strengthening-transparency-accountability-and-responsiveness-phase-2-star-ghana

7	Chilungamo - Justice and Accountability Programme / Tilitonse-linked civil society support COUNTRY - MALAWI	2018-2022	Total EUR 48 million (of which 2 million was managed by the Tilitonse Foundation on the grants for CSOs and funded by EU)	Multiple implementing actors such as ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, DAI, including Tilitonse Foundation	Civil society, accountability and transparency of institutions; awareness, access to justice, democratic processes, SCOs operational capacity. Grants financing.	https://www.gtai.de:/PRO201608035000 https://tilitonsefoundation.org/storage/2022/02/Tilitonse-Foundation-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf https://tilitonsefoundation.org/storage/2022/02/Tilitonse-Foundation-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf https://ccm-cg.com/en/project/mid-term-evaluation-of-the-chilungamo-programme-justice-and-accountability/ https://www.dai.com/our-work/projects/malawi-justice-and-accountability-programme-chilungamo https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/media/122815/download/f7c97e37-5614-4b9d-b28a-4c5e1ba268c1_en https://tilitonsefoundation.org/
8	Renforcement et Participation de la Société Civile au Bénin (RePaSOC) COUNTRY - BENIN	2016-2021	EUR 12 million (+ 2 million co-funding from GIZ)	EU / national authorising structures such as GIZ, Beninese government, The Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society (CPSC), the Maison de la Société Civile	CSOs strengthening, Maison de la Société Civile direct grant support, local governance, state-CSOs dialogue, grants to CSOs initiatives on civil society's participation in democratic governance, public accountability and local development.	https://www.jumelages-partenariats.com/actualites.php?n=10630 https://leconomistebenin.bj/bilan-annuel-de-remise-des-cheques-a-49-osc-le-programme-repasoc-realise-des-performances/ https://beninwebtv.bj/le-repasoc-un-programme-multi-acteurs-avec-100-de-reussite-pour-la-societe-civile-au-benin/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuwSm6MdsPdJrtGsSz4nqTQ https://socialwatch.bj/?p=1450 https://www.scribd.com/document/723646348/02-

				(MdSC)		TermsOfReference-SIEA-2018-9101-1-1 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/61452_en https://finances.bj/appeal-a-propositions-restreint-pour-lappui-aux-initiatives-de-la-societe-civile-en-vue-de-lamelioration-des-services-de-base-aux-populations-et-le-developpement-economique-et-social-inclusif-au-ni/ https://changementsocialbenin.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Guide-de-facilitation-du-dialogue-Etat-OSC.pdf https://sdgglobalforum.org/members/detail/default-2e0b0742e86a92097d5a1b19ef8b3264 https://sdgglobalforum.org/members/detail/default-2e0b0742e86a92097d5a1b19ef8b3264
9	Charter Project Africa (CPA) REGION - Pan-African (11 AU member states plus regional and continental level)	2021-2024	EU co-founded and GIZ (<i>no clear identification of budget</i>)	Consortium led by European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), with African and European partners such as CfA ECDPM, DWF, Gorée Institute, AfricTivistes	Technical resources, civic-tech support, networks and citizen and policy engagement. Grants financing.	https://epd.eu/news-publications/the-charter-project-africa-civic-tech-for-democracy/ https://drive.google.com/file/d/18Gb4xN2RWW-s3OSH-44S08BJEjgSj5d/view https://ecdpm.org/work/charter-project-africa#about https://charter.africa/ https://africtivistes.com/en/blog/acdeg-15-years-promoting-democratic-principles-in-africa https://africtivistes.com/en/blog/charter-project-africa-africtivistes-serving-active-and-engaged-citizenship https://epd.eu/what-we-do/programmes/the-charter-

						project-africa/ https://ecdpm.org/work/charter-project-africa#about Florence Nyangara et al., Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa (Policy Impact Lab and PIMA, January 31, 2025)
10	Strengthening Civil Society Organisations and Gender Inclusivity Project (PROSCIG) COUNTRY - CAMEROON	2023-2028	Total 21 million (17 million EU co-funded, 4 million BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany))	GIZ and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Gender equality, social cohesion, income generation to families and prevention of gender-based violence through technical assistance and funding of local initiatives	https://www.giz.de/projektdaten/projects.action?pn=202322089&request_locale=en_GB https://wcaro.unfpa.org/en/news/european-union-and-germany-joint-forces-end-gbv-camerouns-northwest-and-southwest-regions https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2024-en-factsheet-PROSCIG.pdf https://news-lens.com/cameroon-eu-partner-to-strengthen-csos-gender-inclusivity/ https://hurac.org/2026/04/06/strengthening-inclusive-governance-in-cameroon-renforcer-la-gouvernance-inclusive-au-cameroun/ https://cameroon.unfpa.org/en/submission/call-expression-interest-innovative-gender-based-violence-response-and-prevention-0 https://www.giz.de/en/regionen/afrika/kamerun/news/proscig-faire-du-plaidoyer-un-moteur-du-changement https://www.facdduc.com/actualite/la-gouvernance-inclusive-ne-se-decrete-pas-elle-se-construit-%F0%9F%8F%97%EF%B8%8F%F0%9F%A4%9D/

The sources indicated in the table were used for the projects analysis according to the indicators.

PROJECTS ANALYSIS

PROJECT NO 1

Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme - CUSP I / CUSP II

The CUSP is an initiative designed to strengthen the capacity, influence and sustainability of Ugandan civil society organisations. The programme is jointly funded by the EU and Germany through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and it is implemented by the German development agency GIZ.¹¹¹ The first phase, CUSP I, was financed under the 11th European Development Fund with a total budget of €26.9 million, including €25 million from the EU and €1.9 million from Germany. It aimed to contribute to poverty reduction through better governance by supporting a civil society sector that was more organised, connected, financially sustainable and able to operate independently.¹¹² The second phase, CUSP II, was launched in 2023 and forms part of the broader Strengthening Governance and Civil Society in Uganda programme, which runs from 2022 to 2027 and has a total volume of €44.7 million, including €30 million in EU co-financing (this €44.7 million figure refers to the broader programme and should not be presented as the budget of CUSP II alone).¹¹³

CSOs are the main target group and central actors within CUSP. The programme supports national, district-level and grassroots CSOs through training, mentoring, strategic planning, etc. CUSP I trained 1,635 CSO employees in areas such as institutional development, management and

¹¹¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *The CUSP Bulletin: Generation Next - Paving the Way for a Better Future for All*, (Kampala: GIZ, January 2025), 3

¹¹² European Commission, *Action Document for the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP)*, annex 3 to the Commission Decision on the Annual Action Plan 2016 for Uganda (Brussels: European Commission, 2016), 1

¹¹³ European External Action Service, “EU and Germany Provide UGX 63.7 Billion to Support Civil Society in Uganda,” May 3, 2023 https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uganda/eu-and-germany-provide-ugx-637-billion-support-civil-society-uganda_en; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *Strengthening Governance and Civil Society (GCSP III) in Uganda* (Kampala: GIZ, 2025).

fundraising, supported the preparation of strategic plans for more than 62 organisations and implemented 79 organisational capacity-development plans. It also promoted CSO participation in development processes across 78 districts and helped establish a dialogue forum between state institutions and civil society on the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹¹⁴

The programme also strengthens CSO networks, coalitions and umbrella organisations. Under CUSP II, more than 150 national and grassroots CSOs are expected to receive capacity-development support.¹¹⁵ CUSP II also works with state institutions, including the NGO Bureau, the National Planning Authority and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, to improve cooperation between government and civil society during the planning, implementation and monitoring of development policies.¹¹⁶

The inclusion of women, young people and persons with disabilities is treated as a cross-cutting priority. CUSP supports women's organisations, youth-led groups, and organisations of persons with disabilities. Its activities promote youth participation in budget planning, public-service monitoring, leadership and national development planning, including participation in the preparation of Uganda's National Development Plan IV. Women's organisations receive support to strengthen their institutional capacity and participation in policy processes, while disability-focused CSOs are assisted to advocate for inclusion and provide services to persons with disabilities.¹¹⁷

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	2	CUSP I/II addresses genuine Uganda-specific civil society challenges, including shrinking civic space, weak organisational capacity, negative government perceptions and dependence on development-partner funding. CUSP II also supports citizen participation in implementing Uganda's National Development Plan III, showing alignment with national development priorities. However, the Action Document states that the programme should remain consistent with EU development cooperation priorities, the three NIP focal sectors and existing Germany/GIZ

¹¹⁴ European External Action Service, "EU and Germany Provide UGX 63.7 Billion."; GIZ, *Strengthening Governance and Civil Society*

¹¹⁵ European External Action Service, "EU and Germany Provide UGX 63.7 Billion."; GIZ, *Strengthening Governance and Civil Society*

¹¹⁶ GIZ, *Strengthening Governance and Civil Society*

¹¹⁷ European Commission, *Action Document for the Civil Society in Uganda, 11*; GIZ, *The CUSP Bulletin: Generation Next*.

		interventions, suggesting that some priorities are partly donor-framed rather than defined solely by Ugandan CSOs.
Decision-making power	1	Public documents show consultation and coordination with CSOs during implementation. For example, CUSP includes CSO umbrella organisations in the Steering Committee and relevant CSO partners in technical committees. Some activities also state that topics will be identified “with” or “in consultation with” CSOs. However, the documents do not clearly show that local CSOs co-designed the programme before approval.
Control or access to resources	2	Local CSOs can access support through capacity-building, mentoring, operational support and selected financial grants. The action document also includes support for CSO platforms’ strategic plans and some financial support to enhance CSO operational capacity. However, the main EUR 25 million programme funding is channelled through indirect management with GIZ, not directly controlled by local CSOs.
Adaptation to local context	3	The action document contains detailed analysis of Uganda’s CSO environment, including the narrowing space for advocacy, government mistrust of CSOs, CSO dependence on development partner funding, weaknesses of umbrella organisations, and the specific challenges faced by women’s organisations and community-based organisations. CUSP II also targets national and grassroots CSOs, including women’s, youth and disability organisations.
Community accountability	2	CUSP includes some elements linked to accountability to members and constituencies, especially through CSO platforms fulfilling their mandate to members and representing them to local and central authorities. The action document also mentions internal accountability mechanisms such as the Quality Assurance Mechanism. However, the public documents focus more strongly on reporting, coordination and institutional capacity than on direct community feedback or downward accountability mechanisms.
Equal partnership	2	The programme includes CSO umbrella organisations in the steering committee and relevant CSO partners in technical committees, which suggests some partnership space. However, CSOs are not presented as equal co-owners of the programme. The action is EU-funded, implemented through GIZ, and overall management remains with GIZ.
Total of the section - 12 (medium local ownership)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	3	The action document states that CUSP aligns its priorities with the 2014 EU CSO Roadmap, while the German Embassy launch notes states that the programme targets sectors that are focal sectors of EU and German development cooperation frameworks in Uganda. This means that the programme is strongly framed through EU/German cooperation priorities
Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	2	CUSP I was funded by the EU under the 11th EDF and implemented through indirect management with GIZ. The action document states that GIZ is responsible for overall management of all components. CUSP II is also implemented by GIZ and co-funded by the EU and BMZ.

Short-term projectisation	1	CUSP is organised as a time-bound donor programme with results, components, indicators, logframe monitoring and project-cycle reporting. However, the programme also includes capacity-building, support to strategic plans, fundraising strategies and measures intended to reduce CSO dependence on donor financing. Though there is a mention of the possible Call for proposals, no concrete information of such project implementation part is mentioned. It is important to note that project established regional hubs, including in Kampala, Gulu and Mbale, will facilitate the implementation all over the country that gives the ability to locally identify the needs, issues during the implementation of the project.
Competitive funding culture	2	The action document refers to Calls for Proposals, support to potential applicants, proposal development, pre-contracting support and grant management support. This suggests some competitive funding logic. However, CUSP also aims to facilitate cooperation rather than competition between local CSOs, so the evidence is mixed rather than strongly negative.
Upward accountability to donors	3	The Action Document establishes a clear formal monitoring structure: the logframe serves as the main basis for measuring progress, while the implementing partner must maintain technical and financial monitoring systems, submit annual and final reports, and cooperate with Commission-led monitoring, evaluations and audits. It also provides for joint follow-up, allowing the implementing partner and the Commission, in agreement with the partner country, to adjust or reorient the project when necessary.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	The main programme funding is not allocated directly to local CSOs as lead recipients. The EUR 25 million action is implemented through GIZ, a German development agency, under indirect management. GIZ is responsible for overall management, budget implementation, procurement and grant procedures. Although local CSOs may benefit from capacity-building and selected grants, the primary funding control sits with an international/EU Member State implementing organisation.
Total of the section - 14 (<i>high donor dependency</i>)		

Conclusion of the project: CUSP I/II can be classified as a medium-ownership and high-dependency case. The project recognises Uganda-specific civil society challenges, supports CSO capacity, strengthens CSO platforms and includes CSO representatives in some programme governance structures. These features indicate a degree of local ownership. However, the programme remains strongly donor-framed and intermediary-led: priorities are aligned with EU programming frameworks, the main funding envelope is managed through GIZ, and accountability is structured through logframe-based reporting, monitoring, and other EU requirements.

PROJECT NO 2

PASCAL - Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola

The PASCAL was an EU-funded initiative intended to contribute to economic growth and social development by promoting inclusive, diverse and effective civil-society participation in governance processes.¹¹⁸ The project officially began in 2021 and concluded in 2025,¹¹⁹ operating in 25 municipalities.¹²⁰ The total budget of the project is €5.8/ 6 million (depending on the source). The project was financed by the EU and implemented through delegated cooperation by a European consortium comprising Spain's Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (then known as FIIAPP and now FIAP) and Lithuania's Central Project Management Agency (CPMA/CPVA), in cooperation with Angola's Ministry of Territorial Administration.¹²¹

PASCAL pursued 3 main objectives: improving the legislative, regulatory and institutional framework for participatory governance; strengthening civil-society participation, particularly that of underrepresented groups, in decision-making platforms; and increasing citizens' knowledge of their rights, public institutions, decentralisation and participatory governance.¹²² The project was aligned with Angola's National Development Plan 2018-2022 and the government's Strategic Plan for Territorial Administration, as well as with the EU National Indicative Programme and the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Angola.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Central Project Management Agency (CPVA), *Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL): Guidelines for Grant Applicants*, ref. no. FED/2021/423-890-01, 4, https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/guidelines-for-applicants_pascal.pdf

¹¹⁹ Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations (FIAP), "PASCAL, Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola," https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/proyectos_fiiapp/pascal-support-to-civil-society-in-local-governance-in-angola/.

¹²⁰ CPVA, *Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola*, 7.

¹²¹ Foundation for the Internationalisation of Public Administrations (FIAP), "The European PASCAL Project Has an Impact on Local Governance in Angola," December 16, 2025, <https://www.fiap.gob.es/en/noticias/the-european-pascal-project-has-an-impact-on-local-governance-in-angola/>.

¹²² FIAP, "PASCAL, Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola."

¹²³ FIAP, "PASCAL, Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola."

Angolan CSOs were both project beneficiaries and actors responsible for local implementation. Local CSOs could receive funding for capacity development, citizen-awareness activities, networking, exchanges of information, etc.¹²⁴ One call allocated an indicative €1 million to CSO actions in the 5 target provinces, with grants of €185,000 - €225,000. It is worth mentioning that additional call for proposals was released for €400,000 for smaller actions only in Huíla and Luanda.¹²⁵ By the end of the project, FIAP reported that CSOs had been mapped and strengthened, civil-society networks had been revitalised, local grants had been awarded, and provincial and municipal dialogue forums had been organised.¹²⁶

The inclusion of women and young people was explicitly incorporated into PASCAL's objectives, target groups and eligible activities. The project sought to increase their representation in local decision-making platforms, strengthen organisations working with these groups and improve their knowledge of participation rights and public institutions.¹²⁷

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	1	PASCAL clearly responds to Angola-specific governance and decentralisation challenges. The grant guidelines explain that citizen participation in local government processes is necessary to address community problems and connect public institutions with citizens' real demands. However, the specific priorities are already defined in the programme and call for proposals: civil society participation in governance platforms, awareness of rights, decentralisation and participatory governance. Therefore, local priorities are reflected, but they are channelled through a pre-defined donor/project framework.
Decision-making power	2	The project aims to promote stronger participation of civil society, especially women and youth, in decision-making within participatory governance platforms at local level. This supports some local CSO influence in governance processes. However, public documents do not show that local CSOs have decision-making power

¹²⁴ CPVA, *Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL): Guidelines for Grant Applicants* 5, 7.

¹²⁵ Central Project Management Agency (CPVA), *Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL): Guidelines for Grant Applicants*, ref. no. FED/2021/423-890-02 (second call), https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/guidelines-for-applicants_pascal_second-call.pdf

¹²⁶ FIAP, "The European PASCAL Project Has an Impact on Local Governance in Angola".

¹²⁷ FIAP, "PASCAL, Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola."; CPVA, *Support to Civil Society in Local Governance in Angola (PASCAL): Guidelines for Grant Applicants*, 7.

		over the overall PASCAL programme itself. The programme is implemented by an EU consortium of FIAP and CPVA, which limits evidence of local CSO control over strategic project decisions.
Control or access to resources	2	The grant guidelines require the lead applicant to be a non-profit NGO in Angola, registered in Angola, and directly responsible for preparing and managing the action, not acting as an intermediary. The first call made EUR 1,000,000 available, with grants between EUR 185,000 and EUR 225,000 per province, and the second call made EUR 400,000 available, with grants between EUR 35,000 and EUR 45,000. This gives Angolan NGOs direct access to project resources at grant level. However, for the other funds that were provided by the technical assistance, the funds were directly managed by the donor, that weakens the local NGOs control of resources.
Adaptation to local context	3	PASCAL is strongly adapted to Angola's decentralisation and local governance context. The project covers specific provinces and municipalities, and focuses on participatory governance, decentralisation, local decision-making, women and youth participation, and citizen awareness. The guidelines also require proposals to show relevance to the needs and constraints of the target country, region, sectors, target groups and final beneficiaries.
Community accountability	1	PASCAL includes elements that may strengthen community accountability, especially through citizen participation in governance processes, awareness of rights, and participatory governance platforms. The project also aims to increase citizens' information about public institutions and decentralisation. However, public documents provide limited evidence of concrete downward accountability mechanisms. Therefore, the evidence is positive but incomplete.
Equal partnership	2	PASCAL gives Angolan NGOs an important role as grant applicants and action managers, and it aims to support the design of a national communication strategy by institutions and civil society. However, the overall programme is still an indirect management programme led by FIAP and CPVA. Local CSOs appear as grant recipients and participants in governance processes, but public documents do not show them as equal co-owners of the entire programme.
Total of the section - 11 (<i>Medium local ownership</i>)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	3	The call for proposals defines the objectives and priority areas in advance, including civil society participation in local governance platforms, awareness of rights, public institutions, decentralisation and participatory governance. Applications are also evaluated according to their relevance to the objectives and priorities of the call. This means local CSOs must align their proposals with donor/project-defined priorities to receive funding.
Support "through" CSOs instead of support	2	On one hand, PASCAL includes direct grants to Angolan NGOs, which supports CSOs to carry out locally relevant actions. On the other hand, the grants are still part of a donor-defined project structure, and the actions must fit the call's predefined objectives, rules and evaluation criteria.

“to” CSOs		
Short-term projectisation	3	PASCAL shows strong projectisation at grant level. The first call financed actions lasting only 12 to 14 months, while the second call financed actions lasting 10 to 12 months. The guidelines also use project-cycle requirements, including concept notes, full applications, logframes, indicators, action plans, monitoring systems, evaluation and sustainability sections.
Competitive funding culture	2	PASCAL uses open calls for proposals, online submission through specific system, administrative checks, concept note evaluation, full application evaluation, eligibility verification, scoring grids and ranking of applications. The guidelines state that the highest-scoring applications are provisionally selected until the available budget is reached, with a reserve list if more funds become available. This is a clear competitive grant mechanism.
Upward accountability to donors	3	The grant guidelines require compliance with PRAG rules, eligibility checks, financial and operational capacity assessment, monitoring systems, evaluation plans, expenditure verification, external checks, etc. These requirements are normal for EU grants, but they show that accountability is strongly directed upward to the contracting authority and donor compliance system.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	At the overall programme level, PASCAL is an indirect management programme which is implemented by EU member states organizations. And event, at grant level, the lead applicant must be a non-profit NGO registered in Angola and directly responsible for preparing and managing the action, the lead is accountable to the donor and their decisions to confirm or not the reports, etc.
Total of the section - 16 (High donor dependency)		

Conclusion of the project: PASCAL can be classified as a medium-ownership and high-dependency case, close to the “participatory but dependent” category. Compared with more intermediary-led capacity-building projects, PASCAL gives stronger ownership space to local CSOs because Angolan NGOs can directly apply for grants, manage actions and work on locally relevant governance and decentralisation issues. The project is also strongly adapted to Angola’s local context, especially through its focus on decentralisation, participatory governance platforms, women and youth participation, and selected provinces and municipalities. However, dependency risks remain high because the overall programme is EU-funded and managed through European implementing organisations, while the grant mechanism is based on donor-defined priorities, competitive calls, short project cycles, PRAG-based procedures and other reporting mechanisms.

PROJECT NO 3

Agents for Citizen-driven Transformation (EU-ACT)

The EU- ACT was an EU-funded civil society support programme implemented in Nigeria by the British Council.¹²⁸ Financed under the 11th European Development Fund, it aimed to strengthen the credibility, effectiveness and role of Nigerian civil society organisations in governance and development.¹²⁹ The initial EU allocation was €15 million,¹³⁰ while the final evaluation records an operational budget of approximately €13.8 million after programme revisions and extension. Implementation began in 2019 and continued until 2024.¹³¹

EU-ACT sought to contribute to more inclusive, accountable and gender-responsive development in Nigeria. Its activities focused on strengthening the capacity of CSOs and improving the legal and regulatory environment in which they operate.¹³² The programme worked in 6 geopolitical zones.¹³³

Nigerian CSOs were the main beneficiaries and as well implementing actors. Participating organisations carried out organisational assessments and developed tailored capacity-development plans. They received training, coaching and mentoring in areas such as governance, financial management, strategic planning, project management, etc. CSOs also received small grants to implement community, advocacy, capacity building and similar activities. The final evaluation reported that EU-ACT directly supported 203 CSOs, completed 203 organisational

¹²⁸ British Council. *Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Factsheet* (Abuja: British Council, December 2023), https://www.justice-security.ng/sites/default/files/act_factsheet_dec2023.pdf

¹²⁹ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, prepared by Greg Moran, Tammie Edet Kammonke, and Benedict C. Iheme (Brussels: European Commission, June 25, 2024), 3-5

¹³⁰ European Union Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS. *Nigeria Development Cooperation Programmes: July 2021 Edition* (Abuja: European Union Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, 2021), 35.

¹³¹ European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 3.

¹³² European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 3.

¹³³ British Council. *Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Factsheet*.

assessments and trained or mentored more than 3,000 CSO staff and managers.¹³⁴ EU-ACT also supported engagement with bodies such as the Corporate Affairs Commission and the Federal Inland Revenue Service and helped establish regulatory-information and civil society self-regulation mechanisms. The evaluation found that institutional dialogue produced useful results, but progress at state level remained uneven and some significant problems were unresolved.¹³⁵

Gender equality and social inclusion were integrated into organisational assessments, training and grants. ACT supported CSOs to improve women's participation, accessibility for persons with disabilities, youth inclusion, and inclusive recruitment and governance practices. The evaluation reported that 194 supported CSOs improved their capacity to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion, although the evidence mainly demonstrated organisational and community-level change rather than national transformation.¹³⁶

The programme had a formal monitoring system and was subject to an independent final evaluation. Nevertheless, the evaluators found that some impact indicators were too broad to demonstrate ACT's contribution to concrete outcomes.¹³⁷

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	2	ACT responds to real CSO-related challenges in Nigeria, especially CSO capacity gaps, weak/complex regulation, and the need to strengthen CSO networks and coalitions. However, the core programme priorities were already framed through the EU's need to engage more with CSOs under the EU CSO Roadmap and according to the EU Gender Action Plan II. However, there are some national priorities setting evidence - project should comply with national plans such as National Gender Policy, Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015, and the Child Rights Act 2003. Therefore, local CSOs context is reflected, but at the same time the programme framing remains donor defined.
Decision-making power	1	EU-ACT created a Technical Advisory Committee described as the highest governing body of the programme. It included representatives from government, the EU, the British Council, civil society, EU Member States and

¹³⁴ European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 18-21.

¹³⁵ European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 24, 29.

¹³⁶ European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 39-42.

¹³⁷ European Commission, *Final Evaluation of the Agents for Citizen-Driven Transformation Programme*, 46.

		academia. This gives CSOs some formal space in programme governance. However, civil society appears as one actor among several, while the programme remains funded by the EU and implemented by the British Council. Therefore, CSO decision-making power is visible but limited.
Control or access to resources	3	EU-ACT provides evidence of local CSO access to resources. The public project document lists many grants (precisely 98) awarded to Nigerian CSOs, including local NGOs, foundations, networks and community-based organisations, for activities such as social accountability, public policy participation, community engagement, gender-based violence response, disability inclusion, peacebuilding and civic engagement. This shows that Nigerian CSOs directly accessed project resources at grant level.
Adaptation to local context	3	EU-ACT is strongly adapted to the Nigerian CSO context. It operated in several Nigerian locations, including Kano, Lagos, Sokoto, Rivers, the Federal Capital Territory, Port Harcourt and Adamawa. The programme also conducted political economy analysis of the CSO operational context and organisational capacity assessments with selected CSOs, networks and coalitions. Also, it was encouraged not to create the new networks but support the existing ones showing high willingness for sustainability and support to existing structures.
Community accountability	1	EU-ACT includes several activities that are relevant to community accountability, such as social accountability, participatory governance, citizen engagement, public policy participation and community action grants. However, the public documents focus more on programme implementation, capacity-building, grants and CSO strengthening than on clear downward accountability mechanisms. It was noticed by the project evaluators that project marked improvement in the credibility and levels of public trust in CSOs, so it strongly shows the community accountability outcomes.
Equal partnership	2	EU-ACT presents CSOs as credible and effective drivers of change and includes civil society in the Technical Advisory Committee. The programme also works with CSOs, networks and coalitions rather than only individual NGOs. However, the overall structure is still EU-funded and British Council-implemented, with the British Council identified as the accountable and implementing organisation. Therefore, CSOs are meaningful partners, but public documents do not show full equality in ownership of the overall programme
Total of the section - 12 (<i>Medium local ownership, close to high</i>)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	The EU-ACT project document states that the programme is linked to the reform objectives of the three EU focal sectors of the 11th National Indicative Programme and was designed as a response to the EU's identified need to invest and engage more with CSOs under the EU CSO Roadmap framework. This shows that the programme was strongly framed by EU programming priorities. Moreover, the project evaluation of success was also based on five of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact, that shows

		significant external priorities setting.
Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	1	EU-ACT clearly supports CSOs to become more credible, effective and independent development actors; this is visible in its focus on CSO capacity, networks, coalitions and regulatory environment. However, the programme also uses CSOs to implement grant-funded activities within a donor-defined programme structure. Therefore, it contains both support “to” CSOs and support “through” CSOs.
Short-term projectisation	2	EU-ACT was a donor programme delivered between 2019 and 2024. Many grants were short term and structured as specific projects with defined activities, budgets and expected outputs. However, the ACT also included broader capacity-development elements, network strengthening, institutional support, etc. that should support the sustainability after the project end. It was also noticed by the evaluators of the project, that after the funding of the grants, it does not ensure the sustainability and grantees ended their activity after funding ended.
Competitive funding culture	N.e.	EU-ACT clearly used grant mechanisms and awarded many grants to CSOs, which suggests a project-based funding culture. However, the public documents reviewed here do not provide enough detail on whether these grants were awarded through open competitive calls, restricted selection or direct grant allocation. Therefore, the dependency risk is present, but the evidence is not strong enough.
Upward accountability to donors	N.e.	Documents identify the European Commission as the funding organisation and the British Council as both accountable and implementing organisation. However, unlike grant guidelines or action documents, the available public sources do not provide detailed reporting, audit or logframe requirements for local CSOs. Data is not available to judge.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	2	At programme level, the European Commission funded EU-ACT, and the British Council was the accountable and implementing organisation, which creates a dependency risk because the main programme control sits with an international actor. However, the project document also lists many Nigerian CSOs, foundations, networks and community-based organisations as grant beneficiaries and implementing organisations. Therefore, funding control is international at programme level, but local CSOs receive resources at grant level.
Total of the section - 7 (<i>medium donor dependency</i>)		

Conclusion of the project: ACT can be classified as a medium-ownership and low-dependency case. The project creates visible ownership space by supporting Nigerian CSOs, networks and coalitions, providing grants to local organisations, conducting political economy and organisational capacity assessments, and adapting support to different Nigerian contexts. At the same time, if dependency rate is not high, but dependency risks remain because the programme was framed through EU priorities, linked to the EU National Indicative Programme and CSO Roadmap, and implemented by the British Council as the accountable organisation.

PROJECT NO 4

Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT)

The EnACT is implemented in Zambia by GIZ, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and co-financed by the European Union. The programme runs from 2021 to 2026, with a total financial commitment of about €27.5 million, including approximately €13.65 million from the EU.¹³⁸ Its main objective is to improve access to justice, transparency, public participation and accountability for all sections of the population.¹³⁹

EnACT works in four main areas: policy reform and civic space, transparency and accountability, legal aid and legal technology. It supports law reform, legal information, paralegal services and cooperation between public institutions and non-state legal-aid providers.¹⁴⁰

Zambian CSOs participate as advocacy organisations, accountability actors and legal-aid providers. They engage in policy dialogue, monitor public institutions, raise awareness of citizens' rights and provide legal assistance through local help desks and paralegal networks.

Women, children, young people are as well part of the important group of beneficiaries for the project. EnACT supports women-led CSOs, gender-sensitive legal aid, inclusive participation and improved access to justice for vulnerable communities.¹⁴¹ Youth involvement is also

¹³⁸ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT)*, prepared by Patrick Schünemann, (Lusaka: GIZ, January 2023), <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2023-en-enabling-access-justice-civil-society-participation-transparency-enact.pdf>

¹³⁹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), “Promoting Transparency, Participation and Access to Justice in Zambia,” Project no. 2020.2097.2. (2026), <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/promotion-participation-transparency-and-access-justice>

¹⁴⁰ GIZ, *Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT)*; GIZ, “Promoting Transparency, Participation and Access to Justice in Zambia.”

¹⁴¹ European Union Delegation to Zambia, *Country Level Implementation Plan for the EU Gender Action Plan III: Zambia*, (Lusaka: European Union, 2024), 6,8, https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/media/255482/download/696e3120-0379-4853-b91e-4ed3db63bb58_en; Annika Nilsson et al., *Evaluation of the National Legal Aid Clinic for Women Access to Justice Programme in Zambia* (Stockholm: Expert Group for Aid Studies, 2024), 11, https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2024/01/22133510/DE2024_04_62680en.pdf;

considered as critical point to shape a more accountable society. Youngsters are involved in various workshops in transparency, accountability and good governance.¹⁴²

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	N.e.	EnACT is clearly grounded in Zambia-specific challenges: limited access to justice, corruption, restricted access to public services, contested civic space, and insufficient consideration of vulnerable groups in decision-making and policy reforms. However, there are no clear evidence about the CSOs participation in the priority setting.
Decision-making power	1	EnACT aims to increase civil society participation in law-making and state decision-making processes. The factsheet states that civil society participates in formulating laws and that the project works with state and non-state actors at national and local levels. However, public documents do not show that local CSOs have decision-making power over the EnACT programme itself, its budget or its strategic management.
Control or access to resources	N.e.	Public documents show that EnACT works with civil society and partner organisations, but they do not provide clear evidence that local CSOs directly receive, manage or control project funding. The project is implemented by GIZ, commissioned by BMZ and co-funded by the EU.
Adaptation to local context	3	The project is clearly adapted to Zambia's governance and justice context. It focuses on disadvantaged population groups, especially poor people, women, children, young people. It also works in specific provinces: Lusaka, Southern, Copperbelt, Luapula and Central Province.
Community accountability	N.e.	EnACT includes accountability-related elements because it aims to improve access to accountable institutions, strengthen transparency in state decision-making, and enable citizens to demand rights from the state. However, the public documents do not clearly show downward accountability mechanisms through which CSOs report back to their constituencies or communities.
Equal partnership	N.e.	The project works with both state and non-state actors and with civil society partner organisations. This suggests that CSOs have a recognised role in implementation and policy engagement, but not clear evidence is available. However, the overall project structure is still donor/intermediary-led: GIZ implements the project, BMZ commissions it, the EU co-funds it.
Total of the section - 4 (Low local ownership)		

¹⁴² Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *EnACT Newsletter*, (Lusaka: Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency Programme, July 2025), 3, <https://thehealingbalmfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/EnACT-Newsletter-July-2025.pdf>.

Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	EnACT's priorities are strongly defined through the programme framework established by BMZ, the EU and GIZ. The GIZ project page states that the project is commissioned by BMZ, co-financed by the EU. The approach is also structured into predefined intervention areas: civil society participation, government transparency, access to justice and legal tech.
Support "through" CSOs instead of support "to" CSOs	N.e.	EnACT works with civil society organisations and supports civil society participation, but the public documents present the project as implemented by GIZ, commissioned by BMZ and co-funded by the EU. No additional available data is present to correctly judge the indicator.
Short-term projectisation	2	EnACT is a time-bound donor programme, running from 2021 to 2026, with EU co-funding from 2023 to 2025, which means that EU supports only 3 years. However, the score is not highest because the programme also builds on earlier long-term interventions (CSPP and PLEED).
Competitive funding culture	N.e.	The public EnACT sources reviewed do not provide clear evidence of competitive calls for proposals, grant competitions or ranking-based funding for CSOs.
Upward accountability to donors	1	Some upward accountability is visible because the programme is commissioned by BMZ, co-funded by the EU and implemented by GIZ. However, the available public documents do not provide detailed information on reporting obligations, audits, logframes or grant-level compliance requirements.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	The main funding and implementation structure is clearly controlled by international/member-state actors. The project is commissioned by BMZ, co-funded by the EU and implemented by GIZ. Although the Zambian Ministry of Justice is the lead executing agency and civil society organisations are project partners, public documents do not show that the main funding envelope is allocated directly to local CSOs as lead recipients.
Total of the section - 8 (<i>Medium donor dependency</i>)		

Conclusion of the project: EnACT can be classified as a low-ownership and medium -dependency case. The project is strongly adapted to Zambia's local context and creates space for civil society participation in law-making, transparency, accountability and access to justice. It also works with state and non-state actors at both national and local levels. However, the project remains donor-framed and intermediary-led: it is commissioned by BMZ, co-funded by the EU and implemented by GIZ, while public documents provide limited evidence of direct local CSO control over resources or strategic decision-making.

PROJECT NO 5

Civil Society Fund III (CSF III)

The CSF III was an EU-funded programme supporting Ethiopian civil society's participation in development and democratisation. It followed CSF I and CSF II and was financed under the 11th European Development Fund. Programme started in 2018/ 2019 (depending on the source) and ran till 2023. The total action budget was approximately €16.62 million, including an EU contribution of €16 million.¹⁴³ The project was implemented by EU Delegation to Ethiopia through dedicated Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) which consist of consortium of private consulting firms and organizations from EU countries such as Belgium, Spain, UK, Sweden.¹⁴⁴

CSF III aimed to strengthen CSOs' participation in policy dialogue, improve their monitoring of public policies and develop their organisational capacity. Approximately €11.75 million was allocated to grants: €10.9 million supported 23 lead CSOs and their partners, while €850,000 financed additionally 4 COVID-19 response actions, in total having 27 supported SCOs (one was cancelled due to compliance issues). Grants covered democratic governance and the rule of law, service delivery and community engagement, and gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment.¹⁴⁵

Ethiopian CSOs participated as grant recipients, advocacy organisations, service providers and representatives of citizens. They conducted research, prepared policy recommendations, monitored public institutions, raised community awareness and engaged government authorities.

¹⁴³ EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society through the Civil Society Fund III Programme*, May 15, 2024, https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/external-evaluation-eus-support-ethiopian-civil-society-through-civil-society-fund-iii-programme-brief_en.

¹⁴⁴ EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society*; Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia, "CSF III Final Evaluation," April 4, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ethiopia/csf-iii-final-evaluation_en; European Union–Civil Society Fund III Technical Assistance Unit, *EU–Civil Society Fund III: Civil Society Fund III, Ethiopia*, accessed August 19, 2026, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/csf_iii_info_flyer_for_eud.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ European Commission, *Action Document for the Civil Society Fund III*, (Brussels, 2017), <https://www.gtai.de/resource/blob/34244/63efd11fd933c1afe99148f3cf009131/pro201712065008-data.pdf>; EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society*, 12.

The independent evaluation found improvements in policy engagement, coalition-building, financial management, proposal development and gender mainstreaming. However, CSO recommendations were only partly incorporated into public policy, and structured national dialogue between government, civil society and citizens remained limited.¹⁴⁶

Women's rights were explicitly included through dedicated gender-focused grants. Applicants were also required to address the needs of youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that disability inclusion was not fully institutionalised and that the programme lacked sufficiently gender-disaggregated indicators.¹⁴⁷

The programme had a formal logical framework, but the final evaluation found weak links between programme-level indicators and individual grants, incomplete financial information and insufficient monitoring data. The evidence is therefore relatively strong regarding activities and organisational capacity development, but weaker regarding long-term impact, financial sustainability and reduced donor dependency.¹⁴⁸

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	1	CSF III was aligned with Ethiopia's developmental and governance reform policies, which suggests some adaptation to national context. However, the main programme objective and grant framework were defined by the EU Civil Society Fund structure, with priorities set through EU programming and calls for proposals. Public documents do not clearly show that local CSOs themselves defined the overall programme priorities.
Decision-making power	1	Local CSOs implemented 27 grant contracts and therefore had decision-making space within their own funded actions. However, the overall programme was managed by the EU Delegation to Ethiopia, supported by a Technical Assistance Unit, which means strategic programme-level decision-making remained externally managed.
Control or access to resources	3	The programme allocated EUR 16 million which included 27 projects implemented by local CSOs. This shows clear local CSO access to grant resources, even if overall programme management remained with the EU

¹⁴⁶ EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society*, 29, 43-46.

¹⁴⁷ EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society*, 30, 33, 36, 43-45, 160, 175-176.

¹⁴⁸ EuroPlus Consulting & Management, *Evaluation Brief of the European Union's Support to Ethiopian Civil Society*, 46-48, 171-172.

		Delegation (but without any intermediary).
Adaptation to local context	1	CSF III was strongly aligned with Ethiopia's development policies, civic-space transition and CSO needs. Its grants addressed conflict, marginalisation, women's and youth participation, peacebuilding and rights. Training topics were generally relevant to grantee needs. However, the evaluation also found that the needs assessment had little participation from CSO boards and management, training was often uniform across organisations with different capacities, some materials lacked local context, feedback was not adequately used to adjust support, and EU procedures limited responsiveness to changing conditions.
Community accountability	1	The programme aimed to increase the voice of CSOs representing constituencies and citizens in policy dialogue, which supports some community accountability logic. However, the public documents focus more on CSO participation, capacity and policy dialogue than on specific downward accountability mechanisms such as community feedback systems, constituency reporting or community-led monitoring.
Equal partnership	2	Local CSOs were central grant implementers, which suggests a stronger role than mere beneficiaries. However, the programme was managed by the EU Delegation and supported by a Technical Assistance Unit, so local CSOs were not equal co-owners of the overall programme structure.
Total of the section - 9 (medium ownership)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	3	The programme was an EU Civil Society Fund intervention with predefined objectives: increasing the participation of citizens and CSOs in Ethiopia's development and governance processes. Calls for proposals and programme priorities were set within the EU funding framework, meaning CSOs had to align with donor-defined objectives to access resources. Moreover, the evaluation explicitly linked the absence of the Steering Committee to a lack of consensual strategic definition.
Support "through" CSOs instead of support "to" CSOs	2	SF III did provide support "to" CSOs through capacity development, organisational systems, policy-influencing skills, financial management, resource mobilisation and support to ECSOC. However, the final evaluation concluded that implementation increasingly concentrated on managing and following up 27 grant projects. The TAU shifted away from strategic sector-strengthening objectives and towards project management, EU procedures and delivery of activities.
Short-term projectisation	3	CSF III was organised as a programme of grant contracts and project-based CSO actions. The evaluation explicitly identified reliance on project-based funding as a central weakness. It found that the programme shifted from broader strategic objectives towards activities and products, that implementation schedules encouraged rapid completion and expenditure, and that the exit strategy was not properly implemented.
Competitive funding culture	3	The evaluation concluded that this mechanism effectively divided organisations into successful and unsuccessful or "good" and "less good" CSOs and concentrated support on 27 selected organisations and their partners despite

		sector-wide capacity problems. It also found that local CSOs sometimes felt compelled to partner with international organisations to improve their chances of success.
Upward accountability to donors	3	Upward accountability is likely because the programme was EU-funded, managed by the EU Delegation and supported by a TAU meaning that grant receivers had to report to the EU structure.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	1	The CSF III's 27 grant contracts were implemented by local CSOs and benefited more than 60 CSOs. Although programme management remained with the EU Delegation and TAU, the available evidence shows that grant funding itself was directed to local Ethiopian CSOs rather than mainly to international or EU Member State CSOs.
Total of the section - 15 (High donor dependency)		

Conclusion of the project: CSF III can be classified as a medium-ownership and high-dependency case. The project shows important ownership features because local Ethiopian CSOs directly implemented 27 grant contracts, more than 60 CSOs benefited from the programme, and the intervention was adapted to Ethiopia's civil society and governance context. However, dependency risks remain visible through donor-defined programme objectives, competitive calls for proposals, project-based grant contracts and sustainability challenges identified in the final evaluation.

PROJECT NO 6

STAR-Ghana II Programme / STAR Ghana Foundation

The STAR - Ghana II was a multi-donor civil society programme funded by the United Kingdom (Department of International Development (DFID), Denmark (Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the EU. It was implemented mainly between 2015/2016 and 2020 by a consortium led by Christian Aid with Humentum, SDDirect, the Overseas Development Institute (international organizations) and Nkum

Associates (local organization).¹⁴⁹ Available documents place the total programme value at approximately £21-22 million (approximately 24,31 million EUR¹⁵⁰).¹⁵¹

STAR-Ghana II aimed to contribute to the development of a well-informed, engaged, and active civil society, which is capable of driving transformative change in response to key challenges related to poverty, inequality, and the inclusion of all citizens.¹⁵² Ghanaian CSOs received grants and technical assistance.¹⁵³ One of the projects main goals were to establish STAR GHANA Foundation with the task to enhance the effectiveness of civil society actions in Ghana. The activities included policy advocacy, local governance, anti-corruption, elections, media engagement and school feeding programmes. In 2019 it was counted 89 civil society projects that was funded on above mentioned activities through which more than 5 million people were reached.¹⁵⁴

Women, young people and persons with disabilities were included through the programme's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion strategy. Through the programme it was expected to engage youth by creating hubs for learning, support women organizations in developing the proposals for funding, also engage more churches and mosques to solve social issues and many other activities related to gender and sensitive communities.¹⁵⁵

Indicator	Score	Justification
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¹⁴⁹ Social Development Direct (SDDirect), "Strengthening Transparency Accountability and Responsiveness Phase 2 (STAR-Ghana)," <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/project/strengthening-transparency-accountability-and-responsiveness-phase-2-star-ghana>

¹⁵⁰ According to the ChatGPT calculations of the current year's annual average GBP/EUR rates

¹⁵¹ Ajabu Advisors, *Final Programme Evaluation of STAR Ghana 2*. 2020, 4, https://ajabuadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-STAR-Ghana-2-Evaluation-Report_Ajabu-Advisors.pdf.

¹⁵² Ajabu Advisors, *Final Programme Evaluation of STAR Ghana 2*. 2020, 4

¹⁵³ Christian Aid, *STAR Ghana Foundation Annual Report 2019*, September 13, 2019, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/star-ghana-foundation-annual-report-2019>.

¹⁵⁴ STAR Ghana Foundation, *Promoting Active Citizenship for Change* (Accra: STAR Ghana Foundation, 2019), 3–4, 6, 8–12, 15, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/star-ghana-annual-report-2019.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ Social Development Direct, *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy: STAR-Ghana*. (London: Social Development Direct, 2016), 80- 89 https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/STAR-Ghana_Gender%2BEquality%2Band%2BSocial%2BInclusion%2BStrategy.pdf; STAR Ghana Foundation, *Promoting Active Citizenship for Change*, 11, 14.

Ownership		
Local priority-setting	3	STAR-Ghana II shows evidence of local priority-setting. Its grant manual states that the programme aimed to link local initiatives and local issues to national debates and decision-makers. The transition to STAR Ghana Foundation was also shaped through consultations with Ghanaians from every region, including grant partners, media and civil society leaders.
Decision-making power	2	There is clear evidence of Ghanaian participation in governance, especially after the establishment of the STAR Ghana Foundation. The annual report states that the Foundation has a three-tier governance structure, including subscribers, a governing council and a consultative assembly. However, during STAR-Ghana II, the programme was still managed by a Christian Aid-led consortium with majority of partners international ones and funded by external donors, so full strategic control was not entirely local throughout the programme period.
Control or access to resources	3	STAR-Ghana II gives evidence of CSO access to resources. The programme included grant funding as a central mechanism, and the 2019 annual report states that grants were disbursed to 87 partner organisations supporting work across Ghana (Final evaluation report mentions 130 organizations). The grant manual also identifies grant support to local organisations as one of the programme's main objectives.
Adaptation to local context	3	The programme was strongly adapted to Ghana's civil society and governance context. Christian Aid states that a conducted political economy analysis supported in forming the programme design and identified the political context. The grant manual describes the programme's aim to connect grassroots interventions, policy-level organisations, Parliament, media and social media. The STAR Ghana Foundation was also designed as a Ghanaian national centre for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy.
Community accountability	3	Community accountability is strongly visible. STAR-Ghana's goal was to enable citizens to hold leaders accountable, connect grassroots interventions to policy-level organisations, and create platforms for ordinary people, especially marginalised groups, to demand change. The annual report also states that the Foundation belongs to all Ghanaians and creates platforms for ordinary people to become active citizens in the development process.
Equal partnership	3	STAR-Ghana II has stronger evidence of equal partnership than most other cases because it explicitly aimed to transition from a multi-donor-funded programme into a Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led national entity. The annual report describes this as a shift from reliance on donor agencies to citizens owning and driving the Foundation's programmes and policies.
Total of the section - 17 (High local ownership)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	The programme was externally funded by UK aid, DANIDA and the EU, and it had defined programme objectives related to accountability, responsiveness, inclusion and active citizenship. However, the priorities

		were also strongly shaped through political economy analysis, local consultations, grant partner engagement and the transition to a Ghanaian-led foundation. Therefore, the evidence is mixed.
Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	2	STAR-Ghana II contains both elements. On one hand, it funded CSOs to implement projects on accountability, inclusion and citizen engagement, meaning CSOs were partly used as channels to achieve programme objectives. On the other hand, the programme also aimed to strengthen civil society as a sector, convene CSOs, build strategic partnerships and establish the STAR Ghana Foundation as a sustainable Ghanaian-owned organisation.
Short-term projectisation	1	The programme used grants and project-based low-money funding mechanisms, and the grant manual includes standards, procedures, grant management and donor regulations. However, the STAR-Ghana II also pursued longer-term institutional development through the transition to the STAR Ghana Foundation and the creation of a sustainable Ghanaian entity beyond the donor programme cycle.
Competitive funding culture	3	The grants manual refers to a formal grant-making process, requests for applications, proposal assessment sheets, grant sub-committees and approved procedures for managing grants. The programme also used funding calls and disbursed grants to partner organisations. This shows a clear grant-competition and selection system.
Upward accountability to donors	3	The grant manual states that it forms part of STAR-Ghana’s contractual obligation and that grant recipients must implement projects according to donor regulations. It also includes audit requirements, project audits commissioned by the programme management team, and donors’ right to carry out independent audits.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	2	At the programme-management level, STAR-Ghana II was managed by a Christian Aid-led international consortium, which creates dependency risk. However, the programme’s grant funding supported Ghanaian civil society organisations, and the transition to STAR Ghana Foundation created a Ghanaian-owned and led national entity. Therefore, funding control was international at programme level but increasingly localised through grantmaking and institutional transition.
Total of the section - 13 (high donor dependency)		

Conclusion of the project: STAR-Ghana II can be classified as a high-ownership and high-dependency case. The project shows strong local ownership because it provided grant funding to Ghanaian CSOs, linked grassroots concerns to national-level policy processes, supported civil society convening and coordination, and transitioned into the STAR Ghana Foundation, an independent Ghanaian-owned and Ghanaian-led entity. This makes it one of the clearest examples of a donor-funded programme attempting to institutionalise local ownership beyond the project cycle. However, donor dependency risks remain visible: the programme was funded by external donors, initially managed by a Christian Aid-led

consortium, distributed resources through competitive grant mechanisms, and required grant partners to comply with donor regulations, audits and reporting systems.

PROJECT NO 7

Chilungamo - Justice and Accountability Programme / Tilitonse-linked civil society support

The Chilungamo Justice and Accountability Programme was an EU-funded governance and justice initiative in Malawi. Financed under the 11th European Development Fund, it had an original budget of approximately €48 million and operated through several components supporting justice institutions, accountability bodies and civil society. Its objectives were to contribute to a dignified life for all through accountable governance, informed democratic participation, and the humane and effective delivery of justice by strengthening democratic processes and the capacity of citizens, civil society, accountability institutions, and national bodies to demand transparency and hold duty-bearers accountable, while improving coordination within the criminal justice system and expanding access to formal and informal civil and criminal justice, particularly for women, people living in poverty, and other vulnerable groups.¹⁵⁶

Civil society EU-funded support was mainly delivered through the Tilitonse Foundation, a Malawian grant-making organisation, so the assessment will be limited to this EU support. The EU provided €2 million for this foundation¹⁵⁷ for the period of 2018-2022. Malawian CSOs and community-based organisations received grants and organisational support for activities concerning public procurement, access to services, rule of law and etc. The foundation granted 16 civil society organizations.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ European Commission, *Action Document for the Chilungamo Programme* (Brussels: European Commission, 2016), 1,9, <https://www.gtai.de/PRO201608035000>.

¹⁵⁷ Tilitonse Foundation, *Annual Report 2019–2020* (Lilongwe: Tilitonse Foundation, 2020), 5, <https://tilitonsefoundation.org/storage/2022/02/Tilitonse-Foundation-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ Tilitonse Foundation, *Annual Report 2019–2020* (Lilongwe: Tilitonse Foundation, 2020), 2–3, 9, <https://tilitonsefoundation.org/storage/2022/02/Tilitonse-Foundation-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf>.

Supported CSOs mobilised citizens, monitored public expenditure and services, engaged local authorities and promoted legal rights. Activities included procurement monitoring, community health oversight, town-hall meetings, restorative justice and youth participation in local governance. Women, young people were included through gender and social-inclusion activities, although no public programme-wide evaluation demonstrates consistent results for these groups across all grants.¹⁵⁹

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	2	The project was shaped biased on public policy assessment having in mind such national strategies as Malawi Growth and Development strategy II (MGDS II) or Malawi's long-term development strategy - Vision 2020. However, it is visible that The Action Document of the programme predefined the grant's objective before Tilitonse began subgrating.
Decision-making power	3	Although the overall Chilungamo Programme had a budget of €48 million, this assessment focuses only on the grant awarded to Tilitonse Foundation for subgranting to civil society organisations. The full amount allocated to this component was managed by Tilitonse, a Malawian national organisation responsible for selecting grant recipients and overseeing grant implementation. Tilitonse also participated in the quarterly Chilungamo Programme Steering Committee. Although donors retained contractual oversight, the Foundation had clear governance, policy and grant-management responsibilities.
Control or access to resources	3	The EU Action Document provided for a direct grant award to Tilitonse, which then operated as a fund subgranting resources to CSOs. Local actors therefore directly managed the grant facility and substantial project resources. Score 3 is firmly supported.
Adaptation to local context	3	The component was explicitly situated within Malawi's national development frameworks and Tilitonse's own 2018-2022 strategy. Its supported themes reflected concrete Malawian governance problems.
Community accountability	3	Grant partners established community-facing accountability mechanisms. The Annual Report documents social-accountability clubs, community meetings, citizen forums, dialogue with councils, local grievance structures and community monitoring of public services and resources. Citizens used these mechanisms to demand refunds, record offenses and raise governance concerns.
Equal partnership	3	Tilitonse was not merely a recipient used to deliver isolated activities. It was directly awarded responsibility for

¹⁵⁹ Tilitonse Foundation, *Annual Report 2019–2020*, 14-17.

		operating the civil society grant facility, maintained its own Malawian board and management systems, selected and supported grant partners, participated in the Chilungamo Steering Committee and shared technical decision-making with development partners.
Total of the section - (17 High local ownership)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	1	Chilungamo originated in the EU shaped priorities and had predefined objectives concerning accountable governance, informed democratic choice, justice, transparency and citizen capacity. The Action Document also defined the intervention fields for the Tilitonse grant. Nevertheless, the local Foundation operationalised these goals through its own strategic plan, thematic choices and grant portfolio. The Foundation and its partners selected specific governance problems within the broader framework.
Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	2	The Action Document intended CSOs to help achieve externally specified accountability and justice results, which constitutes support “through” CSOs. The grants also financed time-bound interventions on public services, revenue, procurement, health and local governance. However, the contract simultaneously invested in support “to” CSOs: strengthening the Foundation, improving grant-partner governance, developing financial-management and information systems, creating M&E and communication frameworks, and supporting organisational sustainability and partnerships.
Short-term projectisation	2	The grant implementation period was 48 months, or four years, which does not indicate strong short-term projectisation. However, some project-based reporting and management features were present. Under the 2018-2020 contracts, 16 projects were financed through open and thematic funding windows and were subject to project-closure procedures, disbursement targets, expenditure liquidation and logical framework indicators.
Competitive funding culture	2	Eleven organisations received open-call grants and five received thematic-call grants. This confirms that competition and selection procedures were important funding mechanisms. Nevertheless, the programme also funded partnerships, networks and subgrantees, promoted coalition-building, held learning sessions and invested in grant-partner capacity.
Upward accountability to donors	2	The Foundation reported to EU about the action logical framework, tracked planned and actual disbursements, financial reports, etc. A Joint Technical Team with the development partners reviewed updates and made technical decisions, while the Foundation participated in Chilungamo’s quarterly Steering Committee. These are clear upward-accountability mechanisms. But the same time, projects created community meetings, social-accountability clubs and citizen-monitoring mechanisms.
Funding for international or member country	1	For this specific component, the principal grant facility was directly managed by Tilitonse, a Malawian-incorporated and registered organisation. The facility then funded local and some international NGOs, umbrella bodies and other non-state actors. The documentation confirms that Tilitonse managed the €2 million facility.

SCOs rather than local SCOs		
Total of the section - 10 (<i>medium donor dependency</i>)		

Conclusion of the project: The Tilitonse-linked civil society component of the Chilungamo Programme can be classified as a high-ownership and low-dependency case. The project shows strong local ownership because the EU grant was managed by Tilitonse Foundation, a Malawian national organisation responsible for selecting grant recipients, managing subgrants and overseeing implementation. Tilitonse also participated in the Chilungamo Programme Steering Committee and supported locally relevant accountability and governance initiatives through Malawian CSOs. However, donor dependency trough, low, but remained visible because the overall programme priorities were defined within the EU-Malawi cooperation framework, grants were allocated through open and thematic funding windows, and implementation remained subject to logical frameworks, financial reporting, etc. The project therefore represents a comparatively strong locally managed funding model, although it continued to operate within a donor-defined and donor-accountable structure.

PROJECT NO 8

Reinforcement et Participation de la Société Civile au Bénin (RePaSOC)

The RePaSOC programme supported Beninese civil society's participation in democratic governance, public accountability and local development. It ran from 2016 to 2021 and received €12 million from the EU under the 11th European Development Fund.¹⁶⁰ Some documents refer to a €14 million envelope because they also include approximately €2 million in German co-financing for the GIZ component.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Anne-Sophie Brouillet et al., *Profil Société Civile-Bénin* (September 2021), 9, 12, https://www.academia.edu/download/87777405/Profil_Societe_Civile_Benin_public.pdf

The programme strengthened CSO capacities, supported dialogue with public authorities and financed local initiatives in areas such as health, education, water, and inclusive economic and social development.¹⁶² Implementation involved the Beninese government, The Centre for the Promotion of Civil Society (CPSC), the Maison de la Société Civile (MdSC), GIZ and international technical assistance.¹⁶³

Around 49 CSOs received support in areas of governance, local economic development, and culture and 213 people benefited from the new created job places.¹⁶⁴ Also, programme supported the MdSC (recognized structure that assists and advises CSOs) with 2.3 million for its development and also acted as core operational partner.¹⁶⁵

'Women's empowerment and gender equality were included in the programme's objectives.¹⁶⁶ However, the available documentation provides limited evidence on women, youth and persons with disabilities inclusion in general.

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	2	RePaSOC's overarching objectives and intervention areas were established through the 11th EDF and explicitly linked to priority sectors of EU-Benin cooperation. Local CSOs therefore did not independently determine the original programme framework. However, local agenda-setting occurred during implementation through the MdSC and CPSC which are local ones.

¹⁶¹ European Union Delegation to Benin, *EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Benin, 2021–2024*, 11, https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/media/113104/download/9a5a83d5-bb79-4dbf-a91c-e16bed69938e_en

¹⁶² Social Watch Bénin, "Bilan à mi-parcours du projet RePaSOC subvention directe (suivi budgétaire) : Social Watch et RIFONGA obtiennent des résultats satisfaisants," September 15, 2020, <https://socialwatch.bj/?p=1450>.

¹⁶³ Benin Web TV, "Le RePaSOC, un programme multi-acteurs avec 100% de réussite pour la Société Civile au Bénin," December 15, 2021, <https://beninwebtv.bj/le-repasoc-un-programme-multi-acteurs-avec-100-de-reussite-pour-la-societe-civile-au-benin/>; European External Action Service, "Lancement officiel du programme RePASOC (Renforcement et Participation de la Société Civile au Bénin)," 2018, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/39334_en.

¹⁶⁴ La rédaction, "Bilan annuel de remise des chèques à 49 OSC : Le programme RePaSOC réalise des performances," *L'Économiste du Bénin*, April 24, 2020, <https://leconomistebenin.bj/bilan-annuel-de-remise-des-cheques-a-49-osc-le-programme-repasoc-realise-des-performances/>

¹⁶⁵ Antoine Lawson, "Bénin : Appui de l'UE au programme de renforcement et participation de la société civile," *Infos Plus Gabon*, February 11, 2018, <https://www.infosplusgabon.com/testsite/posts/benin-appui-de-lue-au-programme-de-renforcement-et-participation-de-la-societe-civile/>

¹⁶⁶ Social Watch Bénin and RIFONGA-Bénin, *Rapport des ateliers d'échanges entre OSC et cadres impliqués dans la programmation et la chaîne des dépenses publiques sur le budget sensible au genre* (Cotonou, 2020), 7, <https://budgetbenin.bj/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Rapport-general-echanges-OSC-et-Cadre-en-charge-de-la-Programmation-et-du-budget.pdf>; European External Action Service, "Lancement officiel du programme RePASOC".

Decision-making power	2	The project was co-implemented by EU and local organizations and local government, so the decision-making power was distributed. However, it is worth mentioning that few of the project implementers were local organizations/institutions. Also, the 49 funded CSOs also controlled work planning and implementation within their own local projects. But, the EU, government bodies and technical assistance retained substantial authority.
Control or access to resources	2	RePaSOC directly financed 49 projects implemented by Beninese CSOs, with more than CFAF 2.2 billion (approximate 3,3 million euros ¹⁶⁷) allocated through grants. The Maison de la Société Civile also received a direct grant for organisational and institutional capacity development. Local organisations therefore directly received and managed substantial resources, however, they did not control the complete €12 million envelope.
Adaptation to local context	3	The programme addressed specific weaknesses of Beninese civil society, including fragmented organisation, limited institutional capacity, weak State-CSO dialogue, etc. It operated at national and local levels and included CSO organisations, public-finance monitoring, decentralisation, basic services and gender equality.
Community accountability	N.e.	RePaSOC supported citizen monitoring, dialogue with public authorities, local consultation structures, monitoring of municipal planning and budgets. However, no clear documentation evidence of the about the community accountability was found.
Equal partnership	3	Local CSOs were not presented only as beneficiaries. The Maison de la Société Civile received a direct grant and implemented a major programme component. CSO representatives, which received 49 grants acted as grant implementers. Even though some project part was managed by the European organization GIZ, local organizations can be considered equal implementers.
Total of the section - (12 <i>medium local ownership</i>)		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	RePaSOC originated in the EU's 11th EDF programming and expressly prioritised sectors central to EU-Benin cooperation. Its principal intervention axes and expected results were determined before the local grant process. Nevertheless, the programme subsequently incorporated CSO consultations, the States General, thematic pools and locally designed initiatives.
Support "through" CSOs instead of support "to" CSOs	1	RePaSOC made substantial investments "to" and "through" civil society. The local organization the Maison de la Société Civile received direct grant for implementation of part of the project, while at the same time, the 49 grants used CSOs to deliver predefined programme outcomes related to basic services, local economic development, public accountability, human rights and gender equality.
Short-term projectisation	2	RePaSOC itself ran from March 2016 to September 2021. Major components were also multi-year: the Maison de la Société Civile component lasted 54 months, the GIZ component 38 months and the programme-

¹⁶⁷ According to the ChatGPT calculations of the current year's annual average CFAF/EUR rates.

		management component 43 months. This reduces the evidence of strong short-termism. Nevertheless, implementation remained organised through grant contracts, defined results, logframe indicators, project reporting and closure procedures.
Competitive funding culture	3	Most of the 49 grants were distributed through a call for proposals. The EU described the process as highly competitive and reported that only approximately 10% of submitted proposals were selected. Although some direct grants and collaborative mechanisms existed, but it was limited.
Upward accountability to donors	2	The official grant package included intermediate and final narrative reports, financial reports, payment requests, procurement rules and expenditure-verification requirements. However, funded actions also created citizen-monitoring, public-dialogue and local accountability mechanisms.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	2	Localisation was meaningful but incomplete. The Maison de la Société Civile and 49 Beninese CSOs directly received funding, while national ministries held central implementation roles. At the same time, GIZ with additional external technical assistance coordinated the overall programme and local CSOs did not control the complete €12 million envelope. Funding responsibility was therefore shared among local CSOs, national public intermediaries and international actors,
Total of the section - 12 (<i>medium donor dependency</i>)		

Conclusion of the project: RePaSOC can be classified as a medium-ownership and medium-dependency case. The programme demonstrated strong local ownership by providing direct funding to 49 Beninese CSOs, which implemented locally relevant initiatives concerning public services, local governance, social inclusion and gender equality. The 49 projects received approximately CFAF 2.28 billion (approximate 3,3 mln euros); 46 were selected through a call for proposals and 3 received direct grants. However, donor dependency remained significant. RePaSOC was financed under the EU's 11th European Development Fund, and access to most grant funding depended on a competitive selection process. Grant recipients were also required to follow formal contractual procedures, including logical frameworks, payment requests, procurement rules, interim and final narrative and financial reports, and expenditure verification.

PROJECT NO 9

Charter Project Africa (CPA)

The CPA was funded by the EU through the Pan-African Programme, with additional GIZ support, and implemented between January 2021 and October 2024. It was managed by a 6-member consortium led by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), comprising 2 European (EPD and European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)) and 4 African organisations (Democracy Works Foundation (DWF), Gorée Institute, Code for Africa (CfA), AfricTivistes). CPA operated in 11 African Union member states and aimed to strengthen implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance through civic technology, youth-led initiatives and cooperation between CSOs, national decision-makers and AU institutions.¹⁶⁸ The available documentation does not disclose the project's complete budget.

African CSOs participated as grant recipients, civic-technology developers, researchers, community mobilisers and advocacy organisations. The programme supported various Democratic Governance Initiatives (DGIs), through which CSOs developed Citizen-to Government, youth information, and other meaningful tech platforms, government performance trackers and tools for monitoring political commitments.¹⁶⁹ The evaluation found that CPA improved CSO skills, networking and advocacy, but cooperation with policymakers was inconsistent and research findings were not systematically incorporated into policy.¹⁷⁰

Young people were a central target group, while women's political participation and women-led initiatives also received targeted support.

Through innovative digital tools, the project supported initiatives that strengthened the political and governance engagement of approximately 1.5 million young people in South Africa and equipped women aspiring to political office in Botswana with digital skills, addressing an important gap in traditional governance programmes¹⁷¹.

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-	2	The overall programme objective, geographical focus and emphasis on the African Governance Architecture and

¹⁶⁸ Florence Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa* (Policy Impact Lab and PIMA, January 31, 2025), 5, 8; European Partnership for Democracy., "The Charter Project Africa," <https://epd.eu/what-we-do/programmes/the-charter-project-africa/>.

¹⁶⁹ Florence Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa*.

¹⁷⁰ Florence Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa*, 23-24, 31, 37.

¹⁷¹ Florence Nyangara et al., *Final Evaluation Report for Charter Project Africa*, 54.

setting		civic technology were established within the EU Pan-African Programme. However, African consortium partners and grantees identified country-specific governance problems and designed locally relevant initiatives. The evaluation found that the DGI mechanism supported local initiatives addressing local needs.
Decision-making power	3	African organisations held clear implementation and grant-management responsibilities. African organizations-implementer managed grantees and coordinated regional and local dialogues, ECOWAS engagement, managed digital and civic-tech components. However, EPD retained overall coordination, but African partners had formal authority over grant management, regional programming, training and implementation.
Control or access to resources	3	African CSOs directly received and managed grants for Democratic Governance Initiatives and civic-tech projects. The evaluation covers Democratic Governance initiatives, with grant-management responsibilities distributed among EPD, Democracy Works Foundation and the Gorée Institute. Public calls also provided direct grant contracts to selected African organisations.
Adaptation to local context	1	According to the evaluation, local context was not fully taken into account: the digital-first approach excluded some rural and poorly connected groups, Portuguese-language accessibility was weak, grants could not be implemented in Sudan and Ethiopia, and short funding periods were poorly suited to complex governance environments.
Community accountability	1	Supported organisations created tools and activities through which citizens monitored elections, legislation, government promises, public projects and political participation. Community workshops, consultations and citizen-reporting platforms helped citizens communicate demands to public authorities. The project also established a Pan-African consultation platform through which citizens and grassroots initiatives could contribute views. However, most evidence concerns CSOs helping communities hold governments accountable, not systematic mechanisms through which CSOs reported back to their own members or underwent constituency validation.
Equal partnership	2	The project was implemented by six organisations, four of which were Africa-based and held substantive responsibilities for grants, regional advocacy, digital engagement and technical support. African partners were therefore recognised co-implementers rather than merely beneficiaries or service-delivery channels. Grantees also participated in national and regional dialogues and collaborated with project partners. EPD remained the European consortium lead and controlled overall coordination, so the arrangement was not entirely power-equal.
Total of the section - <i>(12 medium local ownership)</i>		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	CPA was funded through the EU Pan-African Programme and structured around the implementation of African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance, (ACDEG). Country calls prescribed civic technology, citizen

		participation, accountability and engagement with AU or regional bodies as principal objectives. Local organisations could define specific national problems and activities, but they had to fit them within this pre-established framework.
Support “through” CSOs instead of support “to” CSOs	2	The project used CSOs to deliver predefined outcomes concerning civic technology, awareness, elections, accountability, etc. Most grants financed particular activities and outputs. At the same time, the project also provided technical assistance, mentoring, digital-security training, advocacy skills, networks and civic-tech expertise. Some organisations used this support to obtain later funding or expand their activities.
Short-term projectisation	3	Although the overall programme ran from January 2021 to October 2024, most DGIs reportedly received funding for only about six months. The evaluation found that these short cycles were inadequate for governance work, capacity development, civic-tech adoption and sustainability. Many initiatives stalled after funding ended, and evaluators recommended extending future support to approximately three years rather than a few months. The project was also structured through grants, outputs, reports, digital products and project-cycle monitoring
Competitive funding culture	3	Funding was allocated through multiple country, regional and continental calls for proposals, alongside competitive hackathons and innovation challenges. Applications were evaluated and shortlisted, and unsuccessful organisations did not receive funding. Some smaller organisations invested time and resources in competitions without being selected, while formal eligibility, budget and reporting requirements created barriers for less professionalised actors. Although collaboration and networking were encouraged after selection, competitive mechanisms dominated access to project resources.
Upward accountability to donors	3	The evaluation provides evidence of donor-facing accountability. Grantees had to comply with financial-reporting requirements, approved budgets and EU financial rules. Some reports were rejected, preventing access to remaining funds; several organisations had to self-finance activities, terminate projects or repay previously spent funds. The evaluation described EU funding mechanisms as cumbersome and recommended simplifying procedures so that CSOs could focus more on implementation.
Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	2	The principal EU-funded project was led and managed by EPD, a Brussels-based European organisation, and ECDPM was the second Europe-based consortium member. However, 4 consortium organisations were Africa-based, and African partners directly managed most DGIs. Numerous African CSOs also received direct project grants. Funding control was therefore shared between European and African intermediary organisations rather than being exclusively international or fully localised. The evaluation also indicated that donors should be enabled grassroots African organisations to access and manage funding more directly.
Total of the section - 15 (high donor dependency)		

Conclusion of the project: CPA can be classified as a medium-ownership and high-dependency case. The project shows strong local ownership because African consortium partners held substantial grant-management, regional advocacy, technical-support and implementation responsibilities, while African CSOs directly received grants and designed locally relevant civic-tech and democratic-governance initiatives. The programme also connected grassroots organisations with national, regional and continental institutions and supported collaboration among activists, CSOs and policymakers. However, strong donor dependency remained visible. The overarching objectives and grant priorities were established within the EU Pan-African Programme and the ACDEG-AGA framework. Access to resources depended largely on competitive calls, while most DGIs were short-term and subject to detailed financial reporting, approved budgets and EU complex compliance rules. The final evaluation found that complex procedures, rejected reports and delayed or withheld disbursements disrupted some local initiatives and weakened sustainability. The main contract and overall coordination also remained under a European-led consortium.

PROJECT NO 10

Strengthening Civil Society Organisations and Gender Inclusivity Project (PROSCIG)

The PROSCIG programme is funded with approximately €21 million, including €17 million from the EU and €4 million from Germany's BMZ. It is implemented by GIZ from 2023 to 2028, while United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) manages a specialised component addressing gender-based violence.¹⁷²

PROSCIG aims to strengthen Cameroonian CSOs' contribution to gender equality, social cohesion, conflict prevention and inclusive development. It operates across Cameroon, with particular attention to the conflict-affected North-West and South-West regions.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *Strengthening Civil Society Organizations and Gender Inclusivity (PROSCIG)* (Yaoundé: GIZ, July 2024), 1, <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2024-en-factsheet-PROSCIG.pdf>; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), "CSO Strengthening and Gender Inclusivity Project," project no. 2023.2208.9, accessed August 3, 2026, <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/cso-strengthening-and-gender-inclusivity-project>; UNFPA Cameroon, "#WomenEmpowerment: Jointly with #GIZ, UNFPA launches 'Woman eh, wuna place dey!'," Instagram, February 10, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DF5D91OtEge/>

CSOs receive organisational-development support, training, networking opportunities and funding for local initiatives. A €3 million subcomponent implemented by UNFPA (*Women éh, Wuna Place Dey!*) works with women-led and women's-rights organisations in the North-West and South-West to strengthen prevention, protection services and community resilience. The programme plans to strengthen 25 organisations and 5 networks, conduct community dialogues and citizen consultations as well as finance 25 CSO-led projects.¹⁷⁴ However, these current results cannot be found from the available documentation). Activities include preventing gender-based violence, supporting survivors, and strengthening women-led organisations.¹⁷⁵

Indicator	Score	Justification
Ownership		
Local priority-setting	2	The broad themes (gender equality, social cohesion, conflict resolution, income generation and prevention of gender-based violence) were established in the programme framework. This means Cameroonian CSOs did not independently define the overall agenda. However, local organisations have subsequently participated in advocacy activities. Moreover, the project envisages 25 prioritised local projects, citizen consultations and community dialogues.
Decision-making power	2	There is evidence that local CSOs have both initiative-level implementation authority and formal participation in programme governance. Local organization FACDDUC reports serving on the PROSCIG Steering Committee, where participants reviewed implementation progress and performance indicators and proposed. Local CSOs also independently implement their own PROSCIG-supported projects. However, donors and GIZ retain overall contractual authority.
Control or access to resources	1	There are some mentioned that PROSCIG provides financial support for activities carried out by Cameroonian CSOs. This refers that at least some local organisations directly receive and manage project resources. However, the GIZ controls the principal programme envelope.
Adaptation to local context	3	PROSCIG is strongly tailored to Cameroon's governance, conflict and gender context. It operates in all 10 regions while targeting Northwest and Southwest for the women empowerment. Recent activities address

¹⁷³ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "The European Union and Germany Joint Forces to End GBV in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest Regions," February 17, 2025, <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/en/news/european-union-and-germany-joint-forces-end-gbv-camerouns-northwest-and-southwest-regions>.

¹⁷⁴ GIZ, *Strengthening Civil Society Organizations and Gender Inclusivity (PROSCIG)*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ GIZ, *Strengthening Civil Society Organizations and Gender Inclusivity (PROSCIG)*, 2.

		concrete local concerns such as water access, gender-based violence legislation and national civic-integration laws.
Community accountability	N.e.	Actual activities include a nationwide citizen consultation on proposed legislation and local processes through which communities and CSOs addressed local issues. However, no clear evidence of concrete community accountability is visible from the available data.
Equal partnership	2	Cameroonian CSOs are not merely described as beneficiaries. They independently implement supported approaches, receive local grants, participate in advocacy and policy processes and, in at least one documented case, sit on the programme Steering Committee. Local governments such as Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Development (MINEPAT), The Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), etc. Are considered as project implementation partners. However, the GIZ retains overall programme management.
Total of the section - <i>(10 medium local ownership)</i>		
Dependency		
Donor-defined priorities	2	PROSCIG's objective and thematic areas were established through the EU-German cooperation framework. Nevertheless, local CSOs subsequently identify specific projects and advocacy priorities and participate in citizen consultations and policy processes.
Support "through" CSOs instead of support "to" CSOs	1	PROSCIG's central purpose is to strengthen CSOs themselves. Its activities include organisational development, support to networks and platforms, coordination among CSOs, etc. Local organisations also implement pre-defined thematic activities, but institutional and sectoral strengthening is a core programme objective.
Short-term projectisation	2	The programme runs for nearly 5 years and combines local projects with organisational development, network strengthening, etc. These are longer-term institutional objectives. Individual local grants remain project-based, but the available public documents do not specify sufficiently short grant periods or show that short-term outputs dominate the entire programme.
Competitive funding culture	N.e.	The available documents confirm that local CSOs receive funding for local initiatives and that 25 local projects are planned/prioritised. However, they do not explain whether recipients were selected through open competitive calls, restricted invitations, direct partnerships or another process. No public ranking system, scoring grid or grant-call guidelines were located.
Upward accountability to donors	2	Local grant implementation is monitored through GIZ-supported arrangements, and the programme Steering Committee reviews implementation progress and performance. At the same time, community dialogues, citizen consultations and local advocacy processes create some community-facing accountability, but no concrete evidence is available.

Funding for international or member country SCOs rather than local SCOs	3	The total €21 million programme is implemented through GIZ and UNFPA, with GIZ responsible for the main implementation structure. Cameroonian CSOs receive local grants and activity funding, but no evidence shows that they control the principal programme envelope or identify the amount of grants and numbers. The EU contributes €17 million and BMZ €4 million, while the main financial and contractual authority remains with international organisations.
Total of the section - 10 (medium donor dependency)		

Conclusion of the project: PROSCIG can provisionally be classified as a low-ownership and low-dependency case. Local ownership remains limited because the programme's overall objectives, financing structure and strategic framework were established by the EU, BMZ and international implementing organisations. Cameroonian CSOs participate in activities and receive some project support, but the available public evidence does not clearly demonstrate substantial local control over programme-level priority-setting, governance or the main budget.

At the same time, dependency is assessed as low because PROSCIG focuses substantially on strengthening CSOs' organisational capacities, networks, leadership and institutional environment rather than merely using them to deliver short-term donor outputs. The programme has a relatively long implementation period, and there is no clear public evidence that competitive funding or short grant cycles dominate its support model. Nevertheless, this classification should remain provisional because external actors continue to control the principal funding envelope and contractual arrangements.

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ANNEX 2

Declaration of AI usage

DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

Name: Eimantė Vaitekūnaitė

Student ID number: 1096442

Please tick 'x' for applicable items:

☐ I have not used any AI tools in this assignment.

☒ I have used one or more AI tools in this assignment.

If yes, which ones? **ChatGPT**

I used AI tools critically, as an additional tool. I take full responsibility for the information, arguments and final results of my work.

Eimantė Vaitekūnaitė
(Signature)

2026 08 26

Please tick 'x' for applicable items and explain how you used AI tools.

I used the AI tool as a(n)/for the purpose of:

1. ☐ **Idea generator** (e.g., generating arguments or counter-arguments, developing a plan for structure, generating potential research questions, etc.)

Please explain:

2. ☒ **Search engine** (e.g., to find additional literature or contextual information on a specific topic, etc.)

Please explain: **AI supported in finding the sources according to the topic of the Thesis.**

3. ☒ **Writing assistant** (e.g., to correct spelling mistakes and/or typos, to rewrite the text in a more formal or academic style, to restructure paragraphs, etc.)
Please explain: AI supported in reformulating some sentences, correct grammar mistakes and punctuation marks.
4. ☒ **Designer** (e.g., to create a new, unique image or visualization, etc.)
Please explain: AI supported in developing the Figure 2 placed in the Thesis.
5. ☐ **Study buddy** (e.g., to ask for additional explanations with regard to specific learning contents, to generate self-check exercises, etc.)
Please explain:
6. ☐ **Data analysis tool** (e.g., to perform calculations, coding, create charts, graphs or other quantitative/qualitative data visualizations, etc.)
Please explain:
7. ☒ **For efficiency** (e.g., to summarize existing texts, format references, etc.)
Please explain: AI supported in generating the footnotes and bibliography according to the Chicago style.
8. ☐ **Other** (I used AI tools in a different way.)
Please explain:

**9. What steps were taken to mitigate errors and minimize the chance of harm
or inappropriate use of AI?**

Please explain: All information generated or supported by AI tools was carefully reviewed, verified, and critically assessed by the author. The sources suggested by AI were carefully reviewed, read, and verified by the author to ensure their relevance, credibility, and accuracy before being included in the thesis.